

BEST 28-GAUGE SHOTGUNS

OUTDOOR LIFE

NOVEMBER 2015

THE RUT!

CALCULATE THE TOP
TIMES TO HUNT THIS
MONTH! P. 36



TESTED: WATERFOWL
BAGS AND JACKETS

HOW TO LOAD A
DEER BY YOURSELF

MAKE A HUNTING
VIDEO THAT
DOESN'T SUCK

RAIN: THE
SURPRISING
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STORIES OF
THE GREAT
WHITETAIL
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36

COVER STORY
THE RUT
REVISITED

Ever wonder why most rut-timing predictions never seem to be accurate? We did, too, but now we've finally found the formula for success.

BY JEFF STURGIS

ILLUSTRATION BY
RYAN KIRBY

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47 THE TABERNACLE BUCK

The Mormon Church owns one of the West's best hunting ranches. Step through the pearly gates with us to search for a grand-daddy buck. **BY ANDREW MCKEAN**

63 THE COMEBACK

Not long ago, deer were rare, and spotting even a track was cause for celebration. Here are stories from hunters about their life-changing first encounters.

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LIFE

THE

WAYPOINT

SHAKE IT OFF / *Central Montana / 9:31 a.m.*

Most days in deer country are spent waiting. Hunters will watch and wait for an animal—any animal—to show itself. Often, nothing ever does. This was the sort of morning photographer Don Jones was having.

"It was just a miserable day," Jones says, recalling the damp weather. It was drizzling when he first drove past this bedded buck; one hour and no other deer later, the 10-point was still there. This time, he parked.

"When any animal stands up in the rain, chances are it's going to shake. I want to make the story behind this photo sound exciting, but sometimes it's just about a moment in time in an otherwise slow day."





EYE-POPPING PRICE TAGS

► Not everyone is interested in binoculars that cost as much as \$2,650 ["Binocular Test 2015," September 2015]. Do you think the majority of your readers can afford these sorts of prices? Not in my neck of the woods, they can't.

I'll be 80 soon. I've hunted for years, and I don't find it necessary to blow \$2,650 on

a bino. Same goes for most of your gun reviews. Are you only writing for the big shots these days?

P.S.: I bet you won't print this, because it's the truth.

*Darrell Grover
Crystal, MI*

BIG PLAYERS GONE MISSING

► I saw that OL had tested binocular gear and anxiously opened the September edition only to be disappointed. Where were Nikon and Swarovski? Who the heck are Minox and Vortex? Come on, guys, at least include the most-used gear for testing, not whoever sends you free gear. I love your magazine, but this was a disappointment.

*Robert C. Greiving
Winchester, TN*

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AND OPTICS TESTER ANDREW MCKEAN REPLIES:

► Of course we'll print your letter, Mr. Grover, to remind you and other readers that our gear reviews are invitational tests of new products. We invite all optics manufacturers to submit new products—regardless of price. Some, like Swarovski and Nikon, didn't have new products that qualified for inclusion this year.

It's not our job to define what you can afford, but rather to evaluate the latest products on the market, and to allow you to make an educated choice about the right gear for you—and for your budget.

BIRDBRAINED MOVE

► I was impressed by the buck Ben Zuern killed on his grandfather's land ["Deer of the Year," September 2015]. But I was disappointed to read his admission that he broke a federal law in order to secure permission to hunt. By presenting his grandfather with a "bucketful of cowbirds" for a cash bounty, Ben violated the Migratory Bird Treaty Act big-time.

Personally, I find it a challenge to defend our hunting rights against the anti-hunting crowd, and it becomes nearly impossible to defend those rights when faced with a self-admitted violation of federal law by a hunter.

*James Tate Jr.
Harlan, IA*

DEER OF THE YEAR HUNTER BEN ZUERN REPLIES:

► The cowbirds would wreck my grandfather's gardens. He loved other songbirds, and the cowbird is a parasite that infiltrates songbirds' nests. Also, keep in mind this is going back about 20 years, when I was 12 years old.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Wisconsin legislation NR 12.05 established that unlimited shooting of cowbirds is necessary where they're causing depredation, and a federal or state permit is not required to do so. These regulations went into effect in 1990, several years before Zuern helped his grandfather defend the home front.

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

► I'm writing about the picture on the bottom of p. 65 in the September 2015 issue ["Prairie Wings"]. One of the first things taught in every hunter-safety course is to never cross a ditch or fence with a weapon. I don't care if it was loaded or not—the fact that the photographer obviously staged the shot to make it look cool makes my blood boil.

You need to set a higher standard and not support bonehead moves like this.

Kevin Lisser
Mount Vernon, WA

PHOTOGRAPHER BILL BUCKLEY REPLIES:

► You're right, of course. You should never jump a ditch with a loaded weapon. But here's the deal: Not only was the hunter's gun unloaded and the breach open (which, admittedly, you can't see), but the ditch was no more than a big step across. The angle exaggerates the leap. And it wasn't a staged shot. None of the photos in the story were.



We're not sure what's better: The hunt for your buck, or getting to tell the story afterward. The good news is, you can do both.

Our annual Deer of the Year feature is made possible by readers like you. So don't forget to share your photos and stories from this season with us, and encourage your family and friends to do the same. We're particularly keen on hearing about once-in-a-lifetime hunts, big bucks, and first-time successes.

Visit outdoorlife.com/deeroftheyear or email us at deeroftheyear@outdoorlife.com.

A USER'S GUIDE TO THE ARCHIVES

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or annual basis, or get a free 30-day trial. You can even send a gift subscription.

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Origin Stories

RECOUNTING THE RETURN OF AMERICA'S WHITETAIL, TRACK BY CELEBRATED TRACK

I can fairly accurately divine the vintage of a hunter if his earliest memory of a deer isn't a whopper buck or a special hunt. If someone tells me his first encounter with a whitetail was a track, I know I'm talking to a sort of pioneer, someone who was there at the beginning of the most remarkable comeback of a wildlife species in the history of the nation, if not the planet.

In the beginning of the whitetail's recovery, tracks were all we saw, cloven hoofprints pressed in the soft mud of a woodland trail or the dust of a field edge. Next there were sightings of deer, rare events that made the local paper and stirred coffee-shop conversation for weeks.

It's hard for a sportsman who grew up with doe tags, extended seasons, and what I call the deer-industrial complex to comprehend that. For his father and grandfather, there were no deer to hunt in most of America. For the generation of hunters who returned from World War II, whitetails were relics of history, animals that had fed the settlers before they were hunted out. The few remaining deer in America occupied places either too rough to farm or too remote to reach.

If you had told those hunters that whitetails would someday return to the bottomlands of the Midwest, they might have chuckled. If you had told them that in some places, whitetails would become so common (and even bothersome) that people would call them "woods carp," they might have called you a liar.

That's why the discovery of a track meant so much to so many. For deer hunters, it's our origin story. And it's the theme



that runs through "The Comeback," a collection of memories of these first deer that begins on p. 63.

When we called for stories for this feature, accounts poured in from all different places and eras. Mississippi in the '50s. The Ozarks in the '60s. Upstate New York in the '70s. Some are first-person reminiscences. Others are cherished family legends. One of my favorites is from artist Ryan Kirby. His piece, "Possession," recounts his grandfather's first deer, shot in Illinois in 1962. Kirby told me this story as we were tossing around ideas that culminated in this month's cover, Kirby's painting of a laser-focused buck bearing down on a saucer-eyed doe.

Our cover crystallizes the essence of the rut, the magic season when old bucks get careless. But it also captures the timeless appeal of whitetails. Our cover could be from Virginia in the '40s, Kansas in the '60s. Or your state this month.

Andrew McKean

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HOW WE DID IT IN ARKANSAS

A FREEZING HUNTER PLAYS WITH FIRE BY JIM NICHOLS

My dad took several business trips each year to Helena, Ark., and he always timed one to coincide with duck season. It was on one of these trips, in the winter of 1954, that Dad invited me to tag along.

I was 16. I remember because I was old enough to drive the rental car from the Memphis airport to the Mississippi River ferry. We were staying with Dad's business partner, French McKnight. We headed for the hunt club pond early the next morning. Mr. McKnight had a blind on the far shore.

It was cold. Cold enough to coat the lake with a half inch of ice. I was "elected" to ride in the bow and break the ice with my paddle as the outboard struggled through the ice.

By the time we set up decoys and clambered into the blind, I had no feeling in my hands. Mr. McKnight could tell I was freezing my fingers off, and he told me, "I've got something here you're going to like."

I had seen him unload a big tin can from the boat, packed with charcoal briquettes. Now he poured something on top and dropped in a lit match. Soon that crude "Arkansas stove" was thawing my paws.

We had an excellent hunt, and I christened my new Ithaca Model 37 that day. Although I was given the frigid task of fetching our downed greenheads, the little stove kept me in good spirits. It was my

newest friend, and even kept me company in the boat on the trip back across the lake.

Within a week, I was back home in south Georgia, in another boat. This time I was on Brown's Pond in search of wood ducks with my hunting buddy, H. Young Tillman. We paddled along in our old rented rowboat. It felt as cold as it had been in Arkansas.

We set up in a thicket of small trees, tossed out a few decoys, and waited. We were used to waiting. If we killed a single woody—or anything with feathers and webbed feet—the hunt was judged a success.

Soon I decided to break out my newly built Arkansas stove. Young shook his head as I emptied most of a can of Ronsonol Lighter Fluid into it. As the coals began to glow, I felt rather smug. Young quickly came to appreciate how we did it in Arkansas. For a while, at least.

"Jim," he asked, after a few minutes. "Why is it smoking?"

I had an alarming thought: *Where there's smoke....*

And there was suddenly a lot of smoke. But it wasn't coming from the can. Instead, it was billowing out from under it. That glowing stove was trying to burn a hole in the bottom of our boat.

To this day, I can still hear Young yelling,

"The boat's on fire! Are you crazy?!"

What might sound comical now was, at the time, not funny at all. Brown's Pond is a cypress swamp: a vast expanse of lily pads and submerged root systems. It was too deep to walk to safety, and too far to swim. Add to those dire facts the temperature, and that not a soul knew where we were.

Within seconds we had tossed the deadly contraption into the water and splashed pond water onto the hissing black ring burned into the wood. How deep was the

AS THE COALS **BEGAN TO GLOW**, I FELT RATHER SMUG.

circle? How thick the floor? Cypress roots can lurk only an inch below the surface, waiting to sink a vulnerable boat.

I stared at the burn, wondering what had gone wrong. Then it hit me—Mr. McKnight had placed a single asbestos shingle under his stove. Genius! When I admitted my foolish oversight to Young, for some reason he did not throw me overboard after the stove. He just shook his head again.

We eventually made it back to the rickety dock. Sixty years later, we're still friends. Although now I leave the campfires to him.

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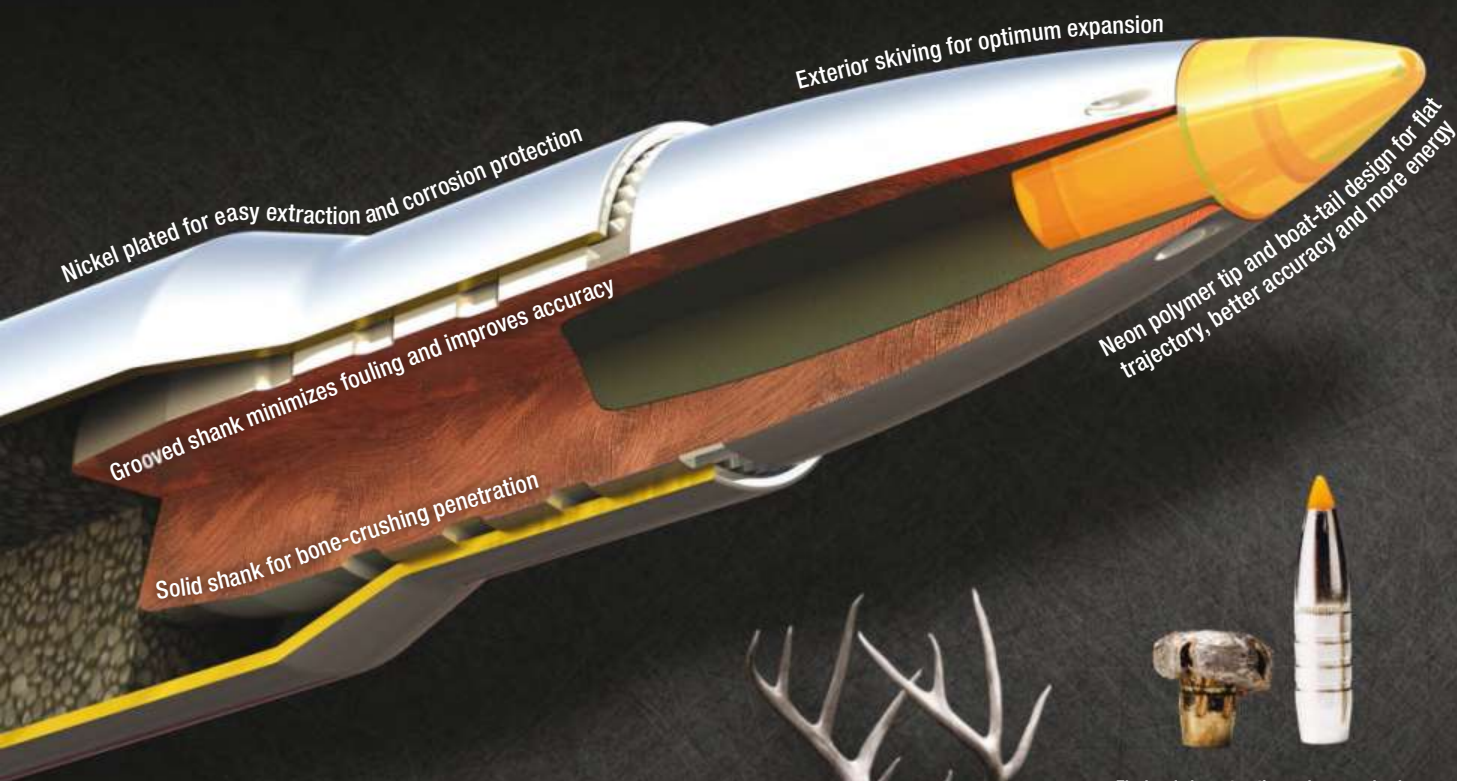
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HUNTING

TIP

Country boys, city girls. Hunt just outside town limits to waylay rural bucks lured by concentrations of urban does during the rut.

Morning neighbor. This 11-point whitetail finds a meal in a backyard in western Montana.

WHITETAILS

THE BACKYARD-BUCK BAROMETER

Urban and suburban deer herds are expanding across the nation. Even if these city-limits deer are off-limits to pursue, you can use them to educate yourself on the behaviors and seasonal impulses of their wild brethren, and become a better deer hunter in the process. Here are 10 things to notice about the deer in your yard. **BY BEN LONG**

Last November I killed the biggest whitetail of my life: a North Woods 5x5 that probably never saw a cultivated field, barbed wire fence, or artificial feed in his life. But my success tagging that deer depended directly upon other deer in a far different setting: urban deer that live in my neighborhood, raid my garden, and even sleep in our dog kennel.

Today's urban or suburban deer hunter lives with an opportunity to study deer behavior that, a generation ago, was the exclusive domain of professional guides and biologists. I consider my backyard deer to be barometers on the hoof. Observe them, and you'll become a more deadly hunter.

1 ► PATTERN deer movements in real time. Deer move in response to subtle weather shifts or changes in daylight. Three times in the last few years I've noticed an uptick in local buck behavior in my neighborhood, and I suddenly noticed giant bucks I had never seen before. I canceled all appointments and dashed for a favorite hunting spot out of town. All three times I've taken bucks after noting this cue. As the fishermen say, "The bite was on."

2 ► TRACK rut phases. Local deer populations have different rutting schedules that are based on local conditions, not a calendar. Keep a journal of deer activity over several years and you'll better understand nature's rhythm in your area. When do bucks start

rubbing trees? When do does start leaving fawns behind as bucks stir up the herd?

3 ► PRACTICE calling techniques. Bleating, rattling, and grunting all draw deer but are best polished with practice. City deer won't react exactly the same way as deer that live under hunting pressure, but you can still pick up important cues about how deer respond under certain circumstances.

4 ► REFINE tracking skills. When I walk my neighborhood, I scan for deer sign, judging the age of tracks and droppings, trying to match prints and rub trees with specific bucks. Sometimes I'll follow a track through our neighborhood park to see how close I can get to the deer that made it.

5 ► SHARPEN your game eye. Nothing stands out like a Booner on a manicured lawn, but city deer often hide in thickets and hedgerows. Practice picking out hidden deer, noticing that flick of an ear or glint off an antler that gives them away. Scan dense cover with a binocular to recognize pieces and parts of deer in obscuring vegetation.

6 ► JUDGE distance. Accurately judging distance is a key skill, particularly for archers. I pocket my laser rangefinder on morning and evening walks. When I see a deer, I estimate the distance, then range it to see how close I came. I strive to pinpoint the distance to the yard.

7 ► RECOGNIZE deer sounds. Deer are more vocal than they seem. You rarely get a chance to listen to their language if you hunt just the weekends and vacation days. Pay attention and you'll hear grunts, bleats, and whines—and learn what they mean.

8 ► EASE those buck-fever jitters. Because urban deer are protected from predators and eat a fortified diet,

a disproportionate number of bucks grow to trophy size. Study them, even watch individuals grow up, to notice the subtle differences between a 3-year-old buck and a more mature specimen. This will allow you to more quickly assess bucks in the field and help calm your jitters when a bruiser finally shows up in your sights.

9 ► MASTER your trail camera. Modern trail cameras are loaded with bells and whistles. But these take practice to master and can be frustrating when not set up just right. By hanging a trail camera on my apple tree, I can experiment with different settings, positions, and lighting conditions long before actual scouting season.

10 ► LEARN to read deer body language. Like dogs and humans, deer communicate with their bodies. A certain way they cock their ears or swish their tail sends a message to other deer. The more you watch them, the better you'll be able to interpret these subtle gestures. A doe's casual sideways glance, for example, can reveal a buck that's hidden nearby.

Pay attention to seasonal changes in behavior, like those of this Montana 8-point.

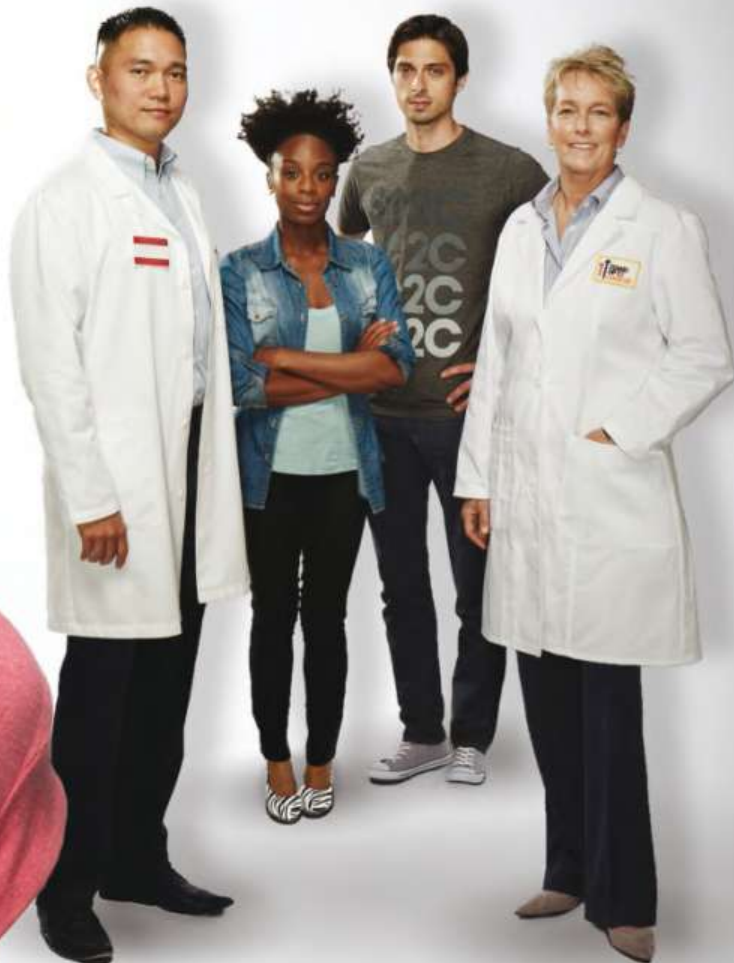


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Photo Credit: Randall Slavin

COLD DUCK

LATE-SEASON WATERFOWLING IS BEST ALONG ICY RIVERS AND RESERVOIRS, BUT HUNTING THERE REQUIRES EQUAL PARTS CAUTION AND PREPARATION

BY TOBY WALRATH

Late December through mid-January is an incredible time to experience waterfowl hunting across the Central Flyway and the interior of the Pacific Flyway. Big orange-legged mallards, fully plumed teal, and Canada geese stack up along open waterways after the first major cold snap. These new birds aren't yet habituated to local hunting pressure, and when they are moving, the action can be fast and steady.

Here's what you need to know for winter waterfowl success.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE WEATHER

Timing your hunt perfectly is always tough, but if the forecast calls for stormy conditions and freezing temperatures pushing from the north, go hunting.

Cold weather gets birds moving, and as the weather worsens throughout the day, migrating birds will drop to the deck looking for a place to hide out and refuel. Any open water will do, but the best spots on early-winter days are ponds and the edges of open lakes and reservoirs.

Expect to fight a constant battle with Jack Frost. Keep open water visible and available to birds by stomping out the ice and placing a few decoys in the slush. If it snows on your decoys, brush them off. If the water freezes, break up and remove any ice chunks.

When the reservoir ice gets too thick to keep pockets of water open, move to nearby rivers. They will be open until the end of the season and will be magnets for late-season ducks and geese, which will be looking for substitute loafing areas once still water has frozen over.

SWIFT-WATER TACTICS

Laws in Montana and some other Western states allow hunters to access miles of prime waterfowling territory below the stream's high-water mark.

Late-season birds will follow the rivers, particularly in the morning and as the weather deteriorates. Hunters who set up on the narrowest sections of rivers will be rewarded with close pass-shooting opportunities. Many sections of mountain rivers are shallow enough in December and January to wade across, but pick your spots. Try to cross where winding river braids shallow the water and reveal cobble that you can use to gauge the depth.

STAY COMFORTABLE AND CONCEALED

Nothing flares ducks and geese like a bulky duck blind on a river bend. If you use a layout blind covered in shaggy grass, you'll be able to set up exactly where the ducks want to be. A few handfuls of snow brushed over your blind will melt your profile into the landscape.

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A Bitterroot River (Mont.) waterfowl hunter returns to his layout blind.

HUNTING
WATERFOWL

OL



The warmer you can keep your body, the longer you can hunt. I keep myself warm in a sleeping bag inside my layout blind to stay alert so I'm ready to shoot the moment the birds pile in.

You'll also need insulated waders, warm clothes, and slip-resistant footwear. Be prepared for ice-covered rocks to complicate everything you try to do. But the action can be far hotter than the water.

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SKID A BUCK, SAVE YOUR BACK

LOAD A DEER (OR OTHER GAME) SAFELY AND SIMPLY ALL BY YOURSELF WITH THIS PICKUP-PULLEY SYSTEM **BY ANDREW McKEAN**

The only thing I hate worse than owing my buddies a favor is throwing my back out. You risk the first when you call for help loading a deer into your pickup, and you are asking for the second if you try to hump it into your truck by yourself.

There's a better way, and it relies on the force-multiplying physics of a simple pulley and a couple of stout ropes. Get this system down, and you'll be able to load all sorts of heavy things into a pickup all by yourself, with a minimum of effort. If you really want to call your buddies, then invite them over for venison burgers. The downside is that once you perfect this system, you can expect to get requests from your friends to load their deer.

Long before you get a deer down, gather the materials you'll need and rig the pickup rope described in Step 1. Here's what you'll need: a hardware-store pulley (I like the 4-inch size with a closed eye on the hasp, but any pulley 2 inches or larger will do), a couple of 40-foot lengths of ½-inch synthetic rope, and either a single sheet of ¾-inch plywood or a pair of 2x8 or 2x10 boards about 8 feet long. These will serve as a ramp for sliding your animal into the truck.

STEP 1

► Run your first rope through the eye of the pulley. Tie the rope as tight as you can between the two front tie-downs in your pickup's bed, then slide the pulley so it's at the midline of your pickup bed. You should do this long before your hunt. In fact, I rig a pulley rope in my pickup early in the autumn, and it stays there all hunting season.

STEP 2

► Slide the plywood or the boards into your pickup, toss the second rope in the vehicle, and go hunt. When you get a deer down, drag the field-dressed carcass to the base of a stout tree, corner fence post, or power pole. You'll use this vertical structure as

your silent partner in this game-loading chore. Back your pickup as close as you can to the deer. Ideally, the open tailgate should be only about 2 feet away from the carcass and maybe 10 feet from your tree or post. Next, slide the plywood or planks out of the truck so the bases of the boards are tucked under the deer. Lean the boards at a steep angle against the open tailgate of your truck, with about a third of their length above the tailgate.

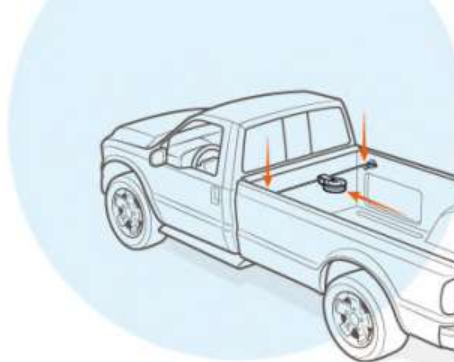
STEP 3

► Thread the second rope through the pulley so that it's at a right angle to the first rope. Bring the rope over the top of your ramp, and then tie one end of this second rope to the antlers of your deer (or to the front legs of a

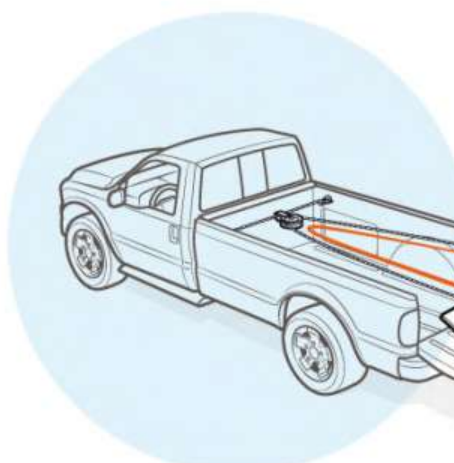
doe or a hog or any other animal that doesn't have antlers). Pull the rope tight through the pulley, then tie the free end to the tree or fence post.

THE DRIVE-AWAY

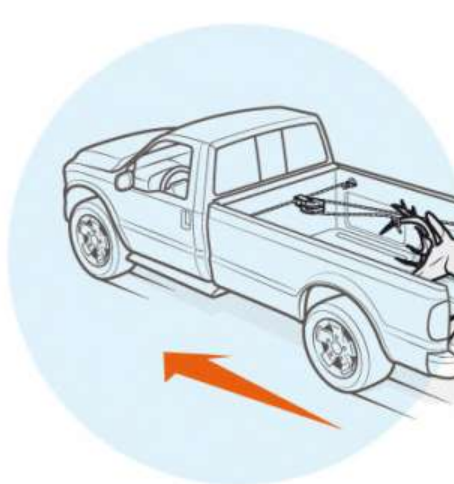
► After you confirm the deer is in line with the ramp, all your knots are tight, and the antlers or legs aren't going to get stuck on your ramp, drive forward very slowly, away from the post. The rope tied to your deer should pull it up the ramp and into your pickup. You'll know it's in when the top ends of the boards are flush with your pickup bed, and the deer is nearly to the top of the boards. Stop driving, untie the rope attached to the post and the deer, and pull the deer the rest of the way into your truck.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



A head-mounted cam is great for POV shots, but for better footage, use a stable rest.

FILM YOUR HUNT

THE BEST GEAR FOR CAPTURING THE ACTION THIS FALL

BY ALEX ROBINSON

Bring the wrong video gear afield and you'll end up with lousy footage and possibly a blown hunt.

We tapped Michael Hunsucker and Shawn Luchtel of the Outdoor Channel's *Heartland Bowhunters* to get the scoop on the best video gear for filming a hunt.

In many ways, these guys have set the bar for shooting high-quality hunting footage, and they even teach classes for amateur and pro shooters to up their game.

Here's the gear they recommend for field photography, and why it works for them.

1. MAIN CAMERA Canon 70D

\$999; canon.com/cameras

The *Heartland* guys shoot with DSLRs, and their footage is distinguishable because of it. But high-end DSLRs can cost more than a new rifle, and many don't offer an autofocus video option (a must for anyone trying to film his own hunt). That's where the 70D comes in. Its autofocus is more effective than that of lower-end consumer models, but its price makes it attainable. Use the money you save to buy a good lens. Hunsucker recommends Canon's 16-35mm L Series; which costs \$1,600.

2. POV CAM Garmin Virb XE

\$400; garmin.com

Like most POV cams, the Virb XE shoots wide-angle video and works great as a secondary camera. It shoots pro-level video at 1440p30 and 1080p60, and comes with myriad mounts and other accessories.

PATRICK "BUZZ" JAVES



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3. ARM Muddy Outfitter

\$160; gomuddy.com

A camera arm is essential for getting stable footage from your treestand. This one weighs 4.5 pounds but supports up to 10 pounds of camera gear and features quiet straps and joints.

4. MIC Sennheiser MKE 400

\$200; en-us.sennheiser.com

Clear audio is critical to any good hunting video. This shotgun mic will capture leaves crunching under a buck's feet and your heavy breathing as he moves into shooting range.

5. BAG Tenzing TZ 1400

Lumbar Hunting Pack

\$139; tenzingstore.com

This company is known for its hunting packs, but it also makes a sweet camera bag. It has 10 compartments with room (1,400 cubic inches) for cameras, mics, and batteries. It comes with a rain cover and, unlike most photo bags, it's camouflage.

1



2



4



3



5



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DEVIL BIRDS

IF YOU'RE HUNTING THEM CORRECTLY, CHUKAR WILL HAVE YOU RUNNING, CLIMBING, CURSING, AND SWEATING. THEN SHOOTING **BY SCOTT LINDEN**

It is literally a running joke: The first time you hunt chukar, it's for fun. After that, it's for revenge. That's because these "devil birds" lead you a merry chase up the nasty hills they inhabit. You will follow, clawing, slipping, and sliding, only to watch them fly downhill before you're close enough for a shot you'd be too out of breath to make anyway.

These aren't your game-farm chukar. The wild ones dwell alongside bighorn sheep, one indication of how rough the country can get. Dry, scabby, rubble-strewn hills are home to chukar. Add their favorite food, cheatgrass, and they couldn't be happier. *Alectoris chukar* eats the seeds of this weed most of the year, then grazes on its green shoots once the fall rains start.

In hot, dry conditions, you can often ambush them en route to or from a stream. But when showers grace their parched habitat, any depression in a flat rock holds enough moisture for these scrappy birds. That means they could be anywhere, though it seems like they always distribute themselves uphill from wherever you find yourself.

A big-running pointing dog is ideal for these birds, whose density

is often tallied in single digits per square mile. If he also retrieves, you'll minimize your own downhill slides and uphill slogs.

Choke your double gun Improved Cylinder and Modified, because most shots will be at 30 to 40 yards. You want to drop birds stone dead, or they

could glide hundreds of yards down a hill that you'll have to climb back up. You'll like heavy loads of No. 6 shot for the same reason.

If you have the luxury, and leg power, start your hunt at the top of the hills. You will cut off any uphill chukar escape routes. Then, traverse slopes toward likely haunts: cheatgrass stands, sagebrush slopes, and broken-edge country characterized by rimrock and rocky outcrops. If you find benches, bowls, and level spots, spend extra time in these places, because they are where coveys like to spend the middle of the day.

When you flush a covey, don't assume all its members took wing. Often a slow learner will hold tight, flushing long after his covey mates. Save your second shot for this gimme bird while your friends are making excuses for their Hail Mary salvos.

A successful chukar hunter's adage is, "Never give up altitude." Once you find birds at a certain elevation and habitat type, it's likely you'll find their cohorts in the same type of place on the next ridge. That lesson will prevent you from being the butt of the joke that started this tale.

Utah chukar hunters take a break before powering up the next ridge.



► WHERE TO FIND CHUKAR

Vast swaths of public land hold chukar in the West, almost all of it administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. One way to find chukar country is to look for the darkest portions of a nighttime satellite photo of the Lower 48. In other words, uninhabited land.

Bring plenty of water for you and your dogs, hunt with a friend, leave word (and a map) noting your destination, and carry first-aid and survival kits.

Good starting points:

- Oregon's southeast and northeast corners
- Western Idaho along the Snake and Owyhee rivers
- Eastern Washington's Yakima River breaks
- Nevada's Pine Forest range and Black Rock Desert

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GEAR

FIELD TEST

BLIND AMBITION

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WATERFOWL ESSENTIALS
TO THE TEST **BY BILL BUCKLEY**

TIP

If birds are flaring over your setup, check around the blind for any items (shell boxes or hulls) that are giving away your hide.

A

As the gear hounds of the hunting world, serious waterfowlers wouldn't dream of hitting the marsh without a blind bag to keep their critical items dry and organized.

While the top pick in our test could benefit from a few additional features, others suffered from having too many. We'd also like to have seen more bags with waterproof bases, since muddy fields and wet blinds and boats are where we spend our best days. Here are the hits and misses from the field.

SCORING

We loaded four blind bags with 13 pounds of the must-haves: two shell boxes, a call lanyard, a duck strap, a thermos, an e-collar and transmitter, a headlamp, a GPS, a Leatherman, gloves, a beanie, and a cell phone. Then we rated each bag in 10 categories: weight/bulk, accessibility, construction/durability, storage, portability (e.g., does the shoulder strap stay on your shoulder?), water repellency (both on top and bottom), lid design, versatility, aesthetics, and price/value (in other words, bang for your buck).



EVERY OUTDOORS FLOATING BLIND BAG

SCORE: 85.5

PRICE: \$60

► The dimensions of this no-frills bag (850 cubic inches) belie how much gear it can hold. We loved its rigidity and the molded lid that slides over the sides to keep out windblown grit and moisture. The shell pouches are easily accessible, and the main compartment stayed bone-dry in our standing-water and sprinkler test. Plus, it really does float—even weighed down with gear. EVERYOUTDOORS.COM



CABELA'S NORTHERN FLIGHT LOCKED-UP

SCORE: 83.5

PRICE: \$100-\$120

► A lot of thought clearly went into this bag. Equipped with support rods, it's rigid, cleverly designed, and super easy to access, and it features lots of useful pockets and accessories. It holds a lot of gear and is well constructed. We only wish it had more substantial buckles and other plastic parts. It also got knocked for not having a waterproof bottom. CABELAS.COM



RIG'EM RIGHT WATERFOWL SHELL SHOCKER XLT

SCORE: 77

PRICE: \$90

► We loved this bag's looks, workmanship, and interior layout, but we weren't fans of the many special-purpose outer compartments, where, for example, stowing a sunglass case makes getting into the compartment below difficult. We would have gladly traded them all for two large pouches at either end. It also fared poorly in the standing-water test. RIGEMRIGHT.COM



DRAKE WATERFOWL DOUBLE-BANDED W/ SWAMP SOLE

SCORE: 68

PRICE: \$75

► The waterproof bottom is a welcome feature, but this bag is over-accessorized without enough attention devoted to the basics. Examples include a loose interior lining and too-flexible sides that fold inward. The sticky-zippered, clear-vinyl interior lid proves more of an irritant than an asset. And the LED interior light is a gimmick, destined to be lost by season's end. DRAKEWATERFOWL.COM

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C

Conduct a test involving six jackets and three avid waterfowlers and you'll quickly learn two things: Personal tastes vary widely, and comparing jackets tailored for different applications can seem like an apples-to-oranges ordeal.

To be as objective as possible, we devised criteria that applied to all styles of jacket, then tested each jacket individually and retested them relative to one another.

SCORING

Our test was based on 10 factors: weight/bulk, functionality, comfort, flexibility, pocket design, hood design (from handling the elements to sight picture when shooting), gun-mounting ease (both standing and shooting from a layout blind), versatility, durability, and price/value. All jackets passed the waterproof test.

We didn't rate warmth—where and when you hunt determines the insulation you need. Suffice to say, each jacket will handle most conditions waterfowlers encounter.



SITKA GEAR HUDSON JACKET

SCORE: 87.1 PRICE: \$489

OKAY, YOU JUST SAW the biggest downside of this jacket: the price. All we can say is that the Hudson is exceptionally well made and built to last, packing a lot of warmth into a very thin and flexible jacket. We were impressed by its design and attention to detail, and the fact that it gives you everything a waterfowler would want without any gimmicks.

You get all the right pockets in all the right places, water-sealing cuffs, a fully adjustable hood that moves with your head and doesn't interfere with shooting, and a versatile camouflage pattern. If we had one criticism, it would be that the sleeve forearms are too constricting. Oh, and did we mention the price? SITKAGEAR.COM



BANDED WHITE RIVER WADER JACKET

SCORE: 86.2

PRICE: \$240

► We loved this jacket even before we looked at the price tag. Lightweight and comfortable, it was designed by someone who's spent a lot of time in a duck blind. It features easily accessible and functional pockets and a hood that doesn't interfere with your vision. BANDED.COM



DRAKE WATERFOWL GUARDIAN REFUGE HS 3 LAYER SYSTEM COAT

SCORE: 78.8

PRICE: \$350

► The Guardian has the best adjustable-sleeve system of the lot. Its insulated hood will please many, as will the full cut for bigger hunters, although the collar is a bit rigid and snug. We were disappointed that the jacket lacked both dedicated shell and hand-warmer pockets. DRAKEWATERFOWL.COM



BROWNING DIRTY BIRD 4-IN-1 PARKA

SCORE: 76.8

PRICE: \$330

► This traditional-style parka is a bit heavy but very comfortable, and it offers great flexibility. Perfect for layering, it can handle any weather conditions. One drawback is the hood, which, when not fastened, will beat you silly in a stiff breeze or when you're running the boat. BROWNING.COM



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HOW WE TEST

I recruited two of my best waterfowl hunting buddies to help me evaluate all the products, and the scores are the average of our respective totals.

It's a challenge to test waterfowl gear that's built for cold, wet conditions during the middle of August. So, we got creative. Blind bags were put through a garden sprinkler and set in standing water.

For the jackets, we spent plenty of time mounting and swinging our duck guns. We did this from sitting and standing positions with the hoods on and off.

One of the few features we did not evaluate was camouflage patterns; many of the jackets are available in different patterns. However, we did note that most of the jackets were too dark for field hunting.

CABELA'S INSTINCT
WATERFOWL PARKA

SCORE: 73.6

PRICE: \$400

► This parka is comfortable and flexible, albeit a bit heavy, and gun-mounting is smooth. The big problem is getting into it: The sleeves of the inner lining bunched up, causing our hand to stop abruptly three-quarters of the way down the sleeve. The front zipper also hung up repeatedly. CABELAS.COM

BERETTA W/BIS TRACK
BOLERO JACKET AND VEST

SCORE: 72

PRICE: J, \$299; J/V, \$279

► This is part of Beretta's Integrated System (BIS). The shell is well made and has useful features like arm-pit vents, but it is overdesigned and sports an uncomfortable elastic interior hood band. The jacket/vest is lightweight, flexible, and very warm, but it's also hard to put on. BERETTAUSA.COM


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BLIND BAG TEST RESULTS

SCORES, SPECS,
AND PRICES, AT A
GLANCE

	EDITOR'S CHOICE	GREAT BUY		
				
	EVERY OUTDOORS FLOATING BLIND BAG	CABELA'S NORTHERN FLIGHT LOCKED-UP	RIG'EM RIGHT WATERFOWL SHELL SHOCKER XLT	DRAKE WATERFOWL DOUBLE-BANDED W/ SWAMP SOLE
WEIGHT/BULK	8	8.5	7.5	6
ACCESSIBILITY	8.5	9.5	7	6
WATER REPELLENCY	10	8	5	9
CONSTRUCTION/DURABILITY	7.5	7.5	10	7
PORTABILITY	8	7.5	9.5	9
STORAGE	8	10	7	6
LID DESIGN	10	8	8	5
VERSATILITY	9	8	7	7
AESTHETICS	8	8.5	9	7
PRICE/VALUE	8.5	8	7	6
TOTAL SCORE	85.5	83.5	77	68

WATERFOWL JACKET TEST RESULTS

SCORES, SPECS,
AND PRICES, AT A
GLANCE

	EDITOR'S CHOICE	GREAT BUY				
						
	SITKA GEAR HUDSON JACKET	BANDED WHITE RIVER WADER JACKET	DRAKE WATERFOWL GUARDIAN REFUGE HS 3 LYR SYSTEM	BROWNING DIRTY BIRD 4-IN-1 PARKA	CABELA'S INSTINCT WATERFOWL PARKA	BERETTA W/ BIG TRACK BOLERO JACKET AND VEST
WEIGHT/BULK	9.8	9	7.8	6	6.8	7.2
FUNCTIONALITY	8.6	8.6	7.6	7.8	6	6.4
COMFORT	8	8.6	8	8.5	7.5	7.8
FLEXIBILITY	8.5	9	8.8	9	8.3	9.4
POCKET DESIGN	8.8	9	5	8	7.6	6.8
HOOD DESIGN	9	8.3	7.8	5.6	6.4	5.2
GUN-MOUNTING EASE	9.6	8.8	8.6	7.6	8.3	6.4
VERSATILITY	7.5	8.5	8.6	7.5	8.5	9
DURABILITY	9.8	7	8.6	9	8.4	8.8
PRICE/VALUE	7.5	9.4	8	7.8	5.8	5
TOTAL SCORE	87.1	86.2	78.8	76.8	73.6	72

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THE RUT REVISITED

NO SINGLE FACTOR CAN DICTATE THE INTENSITY OF RUT ACTIVITY ON ANY GIVEN DAY. BUT IF YOU INTERPRET THIS COMBINATION OF BREEDING-SEASON INFLUENCES CORRECTLY, YOU WILL BE IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME

BY JEFF STURGIS





↖ A MATURE NEW YORK 9-Pointer ON THE HUNT FOR AN ESTROUS DOE AFTER AN OCTOBER COLD FRONT.



ALTHOUGH RESEARCH CONFIRMS that the white-tail rut takes place at virtually the exact same time every year, most hunters know that the rut's intensity varies from day to day and season to season. As much as your head spins with the mental images of scrapes, full moons, rubs, monster bucks, and rut-crazed chase scenes, the best times to be in the woods will rarely coincide with calendar anniversaries. Through years of personal experience and research gathered from other hunters, I have discovered three critical rut-influencing elements that can help you tame the annual madness, and also help you predict what I refer to as "high-intensity rut-hunting days" with great precision. So, let's leave the long-range rut prognostications behind and get down to brass tacks.

Cory Wiedel is one of the most accomplished whitetail hunters I know. He has taken 11 Boone and Crockett-class bucks in the past six years, and he places a priority on going after his scouted target bucks only when he recognizes that the conditions are favorable.

"If I don't see a major drop in temperature combined with strong shifts in the wind patterns, I do not enter the woods," Wiedel says. "I need to prioritize my sit opportunities with ideal conditions.

"There are certain weather-related conditions that consistently increase mature buck movement during the daytime," he says. "My best mature buck sightings and trail cam photos have come when the temperatures are cold and there have been large variations in the wind. For example, I'll see the same does consistently hit agricultural fields every day no matter the time of year, but there are only certain specific conditions that make the oldest bucks expose themselves in daylight.

A BOWHUNTER
IN NORTHERN
MICHIGAN
PREPARES TO
DRAW ON AN
APPROACHING
BUCK.



BONUS TIPS



HOW TO HACK THE RUT

Four skills for the best fall of your life BY MARK KENYON

The whitetail rut, like a first date or the kickoff of college football, is a feverishly anticipated but ultimately fleeting event on the serious deer hunter's calendar. We dream of it, eventually dive into it, and then before we know it, we're mourning its passing. And with this tight time frame comes significant pressure to make the most of those few precious days of whitetail magic. As if

the time constraints weren't enough, tack on all of those early-morning wakeups, painfully long sits, and cold temperatures, and things can get pretty stressful. Luckily, non-hunters have devised a handy set of tricks that are perfect for tackling just such a problem. They're called "life hacks."

Life hacking, as defined by the collective wisdom of Wikipedia, is the

use of "any trick, shortcut, skill, or novelty method that increases productivity and efficiency." As might be expected, most of these are designed to help with such things as reading email faster, checking more items off your to-do list, or getting promoted before your peers. Here are four such hacks that can make you less stressed and more productive while hunting the rut.

“When these temperatures and wind patterns align, a small window of opportunity is created. That’s when I can count on bucks to reliably head for food or cruise for does during daylight instead of after dark.”

Wiedel’s observations mirror my own. My system for finding the best times to hunt is simple, and food is at the heart of the formula. Buck or doe, farm country or hills, a deer’s stomach dictates so much of its daily movements that it should be the foundation for every hunting strategy. Deer are rhythmic pattern feeders that typically browse five times during a typical 24-hour period. We can all relate: Miss a meal and we grow hungry. Of course, deer don’t share the complexities of life that cause us to miss our meals, but they are influenced by several predictable factors, which, when properly interpreted, can be used to effectively foretell the timing for your rut-hunting success. The feeding stimuli are major temperature changes, extreme weather conditions, and moon phases.

Below is the formula, and the details follow, starting with the pre-rut. →

FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

HERE IS HOW TO CALCULATE YOUR OWN BEST RUT-HUNTING TIMES



MOON PHASE
5 points if planning full-moon morning sits, but subtract 5 for full-moon evening sits (+/- 5 points)



TEMPERATURE CHANGE
2 points for every degree of temperature drop, up to 20. (2-40 points)



WIND SPEED POST FRONT
0-10 mph = 5 points
11-15 = 3 points
16-20 = 1 point (1-5 points)



TOP WIND SPEED DURING FRONT
1-10 = 1 point
11-15 = 5 points
16-20 = 7 points
20+ = 10 points (1-10 points)



EXTREME CONDITIONS DURING FRONT
2 points each for extreme rain, snow, sleet, or thunder (0-8 points)



CALM DAYS BEFORE FRONT
2 days = 1 point
3 days = 3 points
4 days = 8 points
5 days = 10 points (1-10 points)



VALUE FOR EACH DAY AFTER FRONT
Day 1 = full value
Day 2 x .67
Day 3 x .33

Add up your points and divide by 7 to create the expected value for your sit. These scores apply to a range that covers from the months of your summer scouting efforts to the end of the primary rut for your mature buck-hunting endeavors.

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN: 1-5 = Poor to Average 6-8 = Good to Very Good 9-10 = Can't Miss



NO.1 CHUNKING

Hunting all day during the rut can be a dynamite tactic for catching big bucks cruising at midday, but very few of us actually enjoy that full day of sitting in a tree. It's tough. That said, life hackers have a trick for dealing with large, overwhelming tasks like this, and they refer to it as "chunking."

To chunk something—whether it is the task of writing a book

or spending 13 hours on stand—break it down into smaller, manageable pieces that can be worked on one at a time, making the larger task feel less daunting.

Randy Hynes, an Illinois bowhunter and founder of 365Whitetail.com, uses chunking to remain vigilant on stand during his annual all-day hunts.

"During the rut, I prefer to ward off mental fatigue by focusing on one segment

of time—10 a.m. to 2 p.m.," explains Hynes. "During this four-hour time slot, I seldom sit down and I remain on high alert. Historically, I've seen the majority of mature buck movement during this time frame."

Hynes then breaks the rest of the day into smaller segments before and after the 10 to 2 focus period, during which he occasionally rewards himself with a snack of fruit, nuts, jerky, or a protein bar.

PRE-RUT MORNING MANIA

Now's the time when testosterone levels in bucks are rising, and some does are beginning to come into estrus. The pre-rut is typified by short bursts of deer movement, often dictated by significant daily temperature changes. There's great potential for sighting active mature bucks. You can also expect a lot of whining from fellow hunters about the dreaded October lull. Whether it takes place or not, it can be difficult to find a buck up and on his feet during daylight. You also run the very real risk of overhunting an area and blowing out a buck for good. That's why waiting for the ideal conditions to hit your best stand makes sense.

Although evening buck movement may take place during the very last hours of daylight during the pre-rut, I prefer to concentrate on the first four hours of daylight, when temperatures are often still 20 to 30 degrees below the forecasted highs.

A hunt I went on several years ago provides a classic example.

Friday, October 26, 2007, featured average daytime highs and lows for the hill country in southwestern Wisconsin. The conditions leading up to that day were anything but average. On Sunday the 21st, the temperature peaked at an unseasonably warm 74 degrees, followed by a steady progression of decreasing temperatures. Thursday topped out at 59, and after a steady onslaught of high winds, the breezes calmed down. Friday's low was to hit 31—breaking the low for the month—before eventually inching toward a high of 53. My hunting partner, Joe Lasak, and I were watching the weather forecast closely before making our move—a seven-hour trip to camp. We finally saw the opening.

After a 45-minute, roundabout walk to the stand and a four-hour wait on the morning of the 26th, I arrowed a mature 11-point buck as

he nudged a doe and fawn out of his bedding area and across a funnel. It was the first time I had hunted the stand. Was there a little luck involved? Certainly. But by not busting the mature buck out of his core area until all the signs pointed to a high-odds hunting opportunity, we were able to seal the deal. There are a few reasons we waited to make the trek. According to my algorithm (see p. 39), we were looking at a perfect score of 10 (**Moon phase: +5; temp change: +40; wind speed post front: +5; top wind speed: +10; extremes: +2; calm days: +8 = 70 points. Day value: multiply by 1. Divide by 7 = 10**). It was as close as you can get to a can't-miss opportunity that resulted in a buck that scored approximately 157.

While pre-rut monsters offer predictable bedding-to-food movements early in the day, hunting can get tricky as the rut intensifies.

THE SUCCESSFUL SETUP



**SUNDAY, OCT. 21 TO
FRIDAY, OCT. 26**

- A 21-degree total temperature drop



**THURSDAY, OCT. 25 TO
FRIDAY, OCT. 26**

- A 6-degree temperature drop



FRIDAY, OCT. 26

- The coldest morning of the entire month



- High pressure had induced a northwest wind



- A rising full moon during the evening created a roller coaster of feeding levels, with a moderate peak during mid to late morning

THE PRE-RUT MATING RITUAL BEGINS ON A FOOD PLOT IN WESTERN NEW YORK. THIS 5 1/2-YEAR-OLD BUCK CHECKS A YOUNG DOE FOR HER READINESS TO BREED ON A LATE-OCTOBER MORNING.

CHARLES ALSHEIMER



NO. 2 THE 80/20 RULE

Also known as Pareto's Principle, the 80/20 rule states that 20 percent of your inputs will typically result in 80 percent of your outputs. Put in simpler terms, this principle explains that in many situations, 80 percent of our success comes from 20 percent

of the work we actually put into it. So if we focus on that most important 20 percent, we can see increased results.

This can be applied to hunting the rut. Have you ever noticed that during this time, most of your sightings and successes each year end up coming from just one or two of your best stands?



Bernie Barringer, author of *The Freelance Bowhunter*, has seen something similar over his years of hunting the rut across the Midwest, and it's led to a strategy that takes advantage of this principle. When first stepping foot on a new property, Barringer will spend the first few days scouting or hunting from observation stands

in order to learn how deer are behaving and where the absolute best stand sites might be. Only then will he commit to diving into the prime spots.

"Throughout the week, I'll narrow it down," says Barringer, "and after three or four days, I'm usually pushing all my chips into one spot and going all in on a single tree

where I think it's going to happen."

You can apply the 80/20 rule to your own hunts during the rut by not wasting time hunting all over your property, chasing "greener grass," and instead focusing your efforts on the top couple of stands that history and scouting have proven to be in the best locations.

PEAK RUT SWEET SPOTS

Of course, this is everyone's favorite time to be in a treestand. We hoard vacation days, use sick and personal time, and otherwise shirk life's responsibilities to be in a tree. Often, it's an all-day, every-day affair until we're either convinced that the rut is over or that the opportunity to shoot a good buck has passed us by. In order to preserve your relationship with your family and boss—or at least avoid burning out a favorite bow stand—make sure to follow the high-value weather variables to take advantage of the best mornings, evenings, or days to capture quality opportunities for the oldest bucks in the neighborhood.

When my personal predictor indicates it's go time, I hunt multiple stand locations during the course of the day. During the morning hours, I sit the downwind side or between bedding areas. When I see that the coast is clear during the late morning or early afternoon, I shift to heavy cover between bedding areas and food sources. By changing stands often throughout the peak rut, I can make the most efficient use of an entire high-value day. If you are having trouble making a decision regarding your stand locations, focus on bucks returning to their bedding areas from food sources during the morning hours, transition areas between bedding areas and food sources during the middle of the day, and daytime bed-to-food trails in the afternoon.

Peak-rut weather forecasts that include substantial decreases in both daytime highs and lows should immediately catch your attention. When those temperature drops are predicted to follow inclement weather—high wind and rain—it's time to get serious. The new moon phase in November 2013 put the icing on the cake, portending a solid, high-value event for a cruising mature buck.



NO. 3

AVOID DECISION FATIGUE

For some hunters, it happens in the morning before heading out, for others it happens at night before bed—but regardless of when it happens, a serious case of stress when trying to decide which stand to sit is an aggravating situation many

of us can relate to.

The discomfort or exhaustion we begin to feel after being faced with tough decisions, day after day, is a common phenomenon encountered by hunters and non-hunters alike, and it's referred to as "decision fatigue." To battle this stress exaggerator, life

hackers develop systems or templates for making simple decisions faster and easier.

Justin Zarr, co-host of the popular online video series *Bowhunt or Die*, has developed just such a system to keep his stand site decisions simple.

"I've been doing this for years by making a spreadsheet

THE RUT *REVISITED*

THE SUCESSFUL SETUP



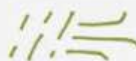
MONDAY, NOV. 4

High of 51, low of 39, with rain



TUESDAY, NOV. 5

High of 46, low of 34, with fog, heavy rain, and high winds.



WEDNESDAY, NOV. 6

High of 46, low of 34, with rain and high winds



THURSDAY, NOV. 7

High of 45, low of 28, with sun, a four-day-old moon phase, and diminishing winds



FRIDAY, NOV. 8

High of 49, low of 26, with light rain

←
A BEAT-UP RUTTING WHITETAIL BUCK, WITH ICE FROZEN TO HIS FACE, PAUSES BRIEFLY AFTER CHASING A DOE ACROSS A FROSTY TENNESSEE WEED FIELD IN NOVEMBER.

With a moon that was only showing 20 percent and still 10 days away from being full, the evening of Thursday, November 7, offered the potential for high early-afternoon feeding activity. Clearing skies and a sub-freezing morning low—following three days of consistently turbulent weather—made it jackpot time for me. The proverbial stage was set for what looked like an epic peak-of-the rut hunt.

November 7 looked great on paper, and it looked even better from my bow stand. As the wind diminished after the two-day hard blow, a mature five-year-old non-typical exited his bedding area to the south and traveled along a bench to my southwest. When I first spotted him, he was 150 yards out and cruising toward a food source. It took him a while to get to me, but when he stepped to within 30 yards, and I was able to make a killing bow-shot. The giant scored approximately 160.

While the oldest bucks in the woods seem to jump to life during the peak rut, the late and post-rut are often the times to connect on a buck that has traveled out of his core area.

that lists the name/location of the stand and then giving it a grade for both wind direction and time of day," Zarr says. "Making this list also helps me identify situations for which I lack the proper stand coverage. There's nothing worse than coming up with a great plan for an afternoon hunt only to come

to the realization that none of your stands are set up for the current wind direction."

By organizing your stands by wind direction, time, or other factors, you can simplify and speed up your stand-sitting decisions each day during the rut, and significantly reduce stress.



JUSTIN ZARR CONSULTS HIS SPREADSHEETS TO PICK PRIME RUT STANDS.

THE RUT REVISITED



CHARLES A. SHEINER



NO. 4 THE MORNING ROUTINE

After lots of early-morning wakeups and full days on stand, the rut has a way of wearing a hunter down and making each subsequent hunt more difficult. A life-hacking solution practiced by thousands of non-hunters looking to improve their daily productivity can

help in this situation too, and that solution is to establish a morning routine.

Morning-routine devotee Hal Elrod, in his book *The Miracle Morning*, explains, "How you wake up each day and your morning routine (or lack thereof) dramatically affects your levels of success in every single area of your life."

ILLINOIS BOWHUNTER DON HIGGINS ATTRIBUTES HIS HUNTING SUCCESS TO KEEPING A ROUTINE.

POST-RUT COLD-WEATHER MONSTERS

The post-rut can produce the opportunity of a lifetime on a long-range cruiser in search of a last receptive doe. Or it can produce many days in a treestand with barely a buck sighting. More than three weeks of solid rut activity can take its toll on even the greatest of beasts in the woods. But when the forecasted conditions are just right, even the weariest of giants seem to rise to the occasion. And when they do rise, make sure you don't miss out on one of the last high-value sit opportunities of the season.

Although morning hours can still be productive at this time, I place a premium on stand locations that take advantage of reliable doe-family group movements from afternoon bedding areas to evening food sources. Although remnants of the primary rut still remain, they are in short supply and fading fast. Recovering mature bucks increase feeding activity to replenish energy losses before full-fledged winter kicks in, and this provides the perfect opportunity for you to take advantage of food-source stands during the afternoon hours.

Although it was just nearing the end of the primary rut in southwestern Wisconsin a couple of seasons back, the weather during the second full week of November set the table just right for an outstanding post-rut evening sit, 10 days after the November full moon.

November 16 was one of several days of bitter weather that offered a great complement to the dark, moonless evening skies during the entire week.

THE SUCCESSFUL SETUP



THURSDAY, NOV. 13

High of 28, low of 22, with high winds and a trace of snow



FRIDAY, NOV. 14

High of 25, low of 13, with moderate winds



SATURDAY, NOV. 15

High of 25, low of 12, with 1 inch of snow and variable winds



SUNDAY, NOV. 16

High of 27, low of 14, with a trace of snow and heavy but diminishing winds



MONDAY, NOV. 17

High of 17, low of 12, with bitter temperatures and a rising barometer

My friend Dave Larson was eagerly awaiting one last chance at a mature 10-point he had hoped to cross paths with during the early bow season. Significantly decreasing winds that had approached 30 mph in the late-morning hours offered an attractive set of conditions for a high-value afternoon vigil. Larson decided to sit a brush-choked ladder stand adjacent to a standing cornfield in a last-ditch effort to find a buck in search of a receptive doe.

The plan worked—almost. Larson's arrow found the one small branch between his stand and a post-rut 160-inch buck. The formula worked to perfection—it was the final outcome that could have used a little work. ▲▲▲

← AS THE RUT WINDS DOWN, THIS SURVIVOR BUCK CHECKS A COLD-WEATHER FOOD PLOT IN LATE NOVEMBER IN AN ATTEMPT TO LOCATE AND BREED THE LAST ESTROUS DOES OF THE SEASON.

Focused, productive, successful mornings generate focused, productive, successful days."

In other words, having a consistent routine that gets your mornings during the rut started off right is crucial to making it to the stand on time, with the right gear, and in the right frame of mind.

Don Higgins, an Illinois

bowhunter and outdoor writer, has found that for him, the key is to avoid the temptation to sleep in a day or two. Instead, he sticks to a routine.

"I find it easier to get up early each day rather than tougher," explains Higgins. "I start hunting mornings (and waking early) around the third or fourth of November, and

then I just stick with it until after Thanksgiving weekend."

Develop a set of specific morning tasks you need to complete each day before heading out to hunt, write down a list of the gear you need to make sure is packed, and decide on a time you'll wake up—and then stick to it all during the rut.

IT'S ABOUT TIME.



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The TABERNACLE BUCK

**DESERT LAND & LIVESTOCK, THE LARGEST RANCH IN
UTAH, IS OWNED BY THE MORMON CHURCH. FOR MULE DEER
HUNTERS, IT'S THE PROMISED LAND**

BY ANDREW MCKEAN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL FRIBERG



OUTDOOR LIFE
NOVEMBER 2015

T

THE ORIGINAL DESERET was supposed to be America's 31st state, a vast empire of Mormonism that would have stretched from the Rockies to the Sierra Nevada, and from Wyoming south to Arizona. The brainchild of Mormon leaders, including Brigham Young, Deseret was intended to be the homeland for Young's acolytes, a theocratic nation-state that resembled the Catholics' Vatican City—only ten thousand times bigger and with infinitely more cactus.

Political tension between free and slave states in the years leading up to the Civil War doomed the State of Deseret, and Young had to settle for the modern boundaries of Utah in order for it to be admitted to the Union. But the name—and maybe more important, the idea—of Deseret lives on. You will find it in the name of one of the state's largest newspapers, the *Deseret News*. And you can see it on road signs and

other iconography of Utah. Deseret, according to Mormon scripture, is the name of the honeybee, and the beehive remains not only Utah's state symbol, but also a reminder of the Mormon values of industry, community, and thrift.

A BIG-GAME RANCH

The modern-day Deseret is properly called Deseret Land & Livestock. It's a 235,000-acre ranch, the largest single private property in the state of Utah. Since 1983, it's been owned by the Mormon Church, which runs it as an agricultural operation. But the church leases the ranch for paid big-game hunts. Because of its reputation for producing record-class bucks and bulls, getting an invitation to hunt here is nearly as hard as getting an audience with the Pope.

Deseret (the ranch) is spoken of with reverence among Western hunters, but few have actually hunted here. I've known of the ranch for years, partly by the black hole it creates on maps of the West. No public roads pass through the property, and a private corps of game wardens patrols its boundaries. You can look over the fence, but you can't come in without permission.

I was given that permission last fall. Geoff Maki—the product manager for a new line of Browning hunting packs distributed by Signature Products Group, or SPG, in Salt Lake City—asked if I'd join him for a mule deer hunt in paradise.

THE TYRANNY OF AGE

"You want to age him? Check his driver's license!"

Maki smiles as he says this to our guide, Landon Sherwood, but it's a comment borne of impatience and frustration. We have just passed up a 190-class mule deer, his antlers heavy as a pitchfork handle.

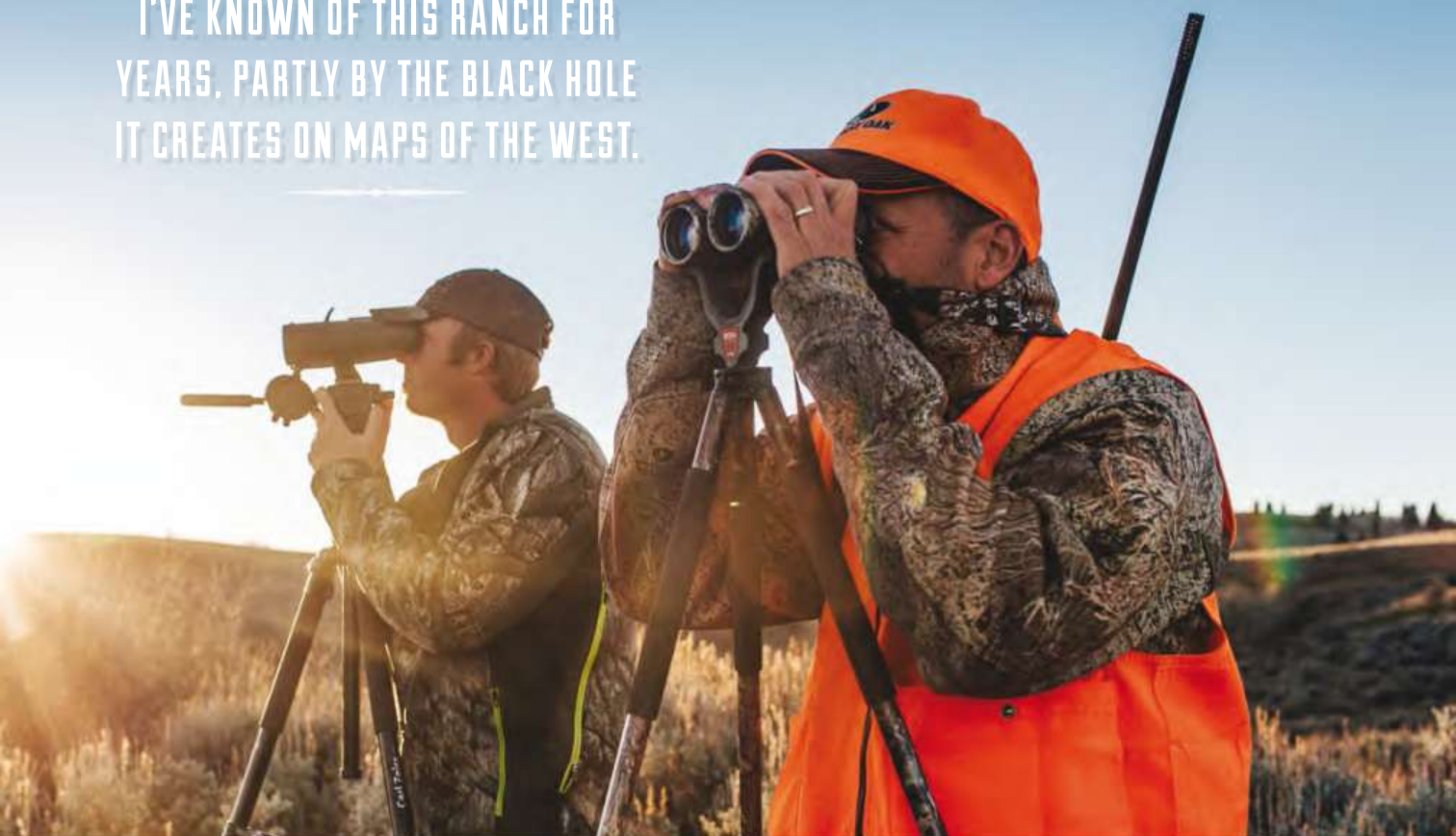
Sherwood sucks on the wiry tuft of hair on his lower lip—his outback soul patch—and shakes his head. "Four-year-old. Gotta let him go."

We've been hearing this all day, as we've glassed one remarkable buck after another. "Too young." "Give him a year." "Let's look for his daddy." We are trolling, Sherwood's term for driving remote ridgelines, stopping when we see either a herd of deer or terrain that's likely to hold bucks. I stopped counting the sort of bucks I'd shoot at home in Montana when I hit 20. We are, Sherwood tells us, looking for five-year-old and older

◀ **Sprawling across 235,000 acres, Deseret Ranch links the Wasatch and the Uinta mountain ranges of Utah.**



I'VE KNOWN OF THIS RANCH FOR
YEARS, PARTLY BY THE BLACK HOLE
IT CREATES ON MAPS OF THE WEST.



Clockwise from top: Landon Sherwood and Geoff Maki glass for bucks at sunrise; hunters relax after packing out the author's buck; a young Deseret mule deer buck; Sherwood with his glassing setup—a 15X Swarovski binocular mounted on a tripod.



HOW WILL WE KNOW AN OLD BUCK WHEN
WE SEE HIM? NOT BY HIS ANTLERS, SAYS
VAGRANT. "BY HIS FACE."





deer. That's the ranch rule, imposed to perpetuate its reputation for record-class animals. Sherwood says if he brings a specimen back to the skinning shed that's younger than five, at best he'll get razzed by fellow Deseret guides. At worst, he'll lose his job.

After a while, it's fun to stand down on big bucks, if only because it builds my expectation that the buck that passes Sherwood's muster will be a colossus. It's also fun to mess with Sherwood, who may be the most selective bastard I've ever met when it comes to scrutinizing deer.

TROLLING WITH VAGRANT

His friends call Sherwood "Vagrant," a nickname he earned from his vagabond existence in pursuit of big deer and elk across the West. He routinely quits seasonal jobs after a couple of weeks to go scout big animals or hunt for their shed antlers. Once, he tells me, he spent 30 nights sleeping in his pickup while hunting for the sheds of a single magnum mule deer buck on "The Strip," the chunk of Arizona north of the Grand Canyon that is widely considered to be the best mule

▲ Clockwise from above: Maki and Sherwood hike to the edge of a secluded basin to glass for bucks; the author waiting on an open shot at a bedded buck; Sherwood in profile. Opposite: The author pauses after packing antlers and meat from his buck, which he killed in one of the timbered draws below.

deer hunting unit in America. He finally found the shed, he tells me, but obeying the code of shed hunters, he had to give it to his buddy who found the matching side first.

Vagrant knows mule deer like nobody I've ever met, which is one reason I acquiesce to his insistence on targeting only the oldest residents of this vast ranch.

How will we know him when we see him, I ask?

"By his face," says Vagrant. "In most years, you can also look at his body type. Old bucks have big potbellies and saddlebacks, and they just look physically big. But this year, we've had so much [forage-growing] moisture here that every deer is in great shape, physically, so body condition isn't a good indicator of age. But the face is. You want to look for a prominent Roman nose, and old bucks have a wide brow with a dished-out forehead. Sometimes, old bucks have a white, chalky face, but that's not always a good clue, because some younger bucks have white faces."

But old bucks' eyes look almost look like a predator's, set close together, says Vagrant. That gives them a sort of squinty look, with a deep pouch at the tear duct. Their heads are blocky, almost square. Think of the look of a fight-hardened, punch-puffy boxer. That's the face of a mature mule deer.

Antlers are almost the last thing Sherwood considers on a buck, but when he does, he doesn't look at the points or the mass of a rack. He looks at the base, to find what he calls "pearling," or the eruption of dozens of little rounded crenellations between the eye guards and the brow that is a trait of older bucks.

And so we continue to troll, studying the faces of every deer we meet, looking for a geriatric giant.

MULE DEER PARADISE

If you were to aim a riflescope at mule deer distribution in the American West, your vertical crosshair would cover the Rockies from Alberta to Sonora. Your horizontal reticle would probably range from Nebraska to southern Oregon. And your crosshairs would meet near the point where Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah come together. Deseret Land & Livestock is only slightly south of here, and it contains what seems like an endless expanse of essential mule deer habitat.

We find deer scattered across sagebrush meadows, grazing beside elk and moose in the shade of well-watered groves of quaking aspen. With our 15X binoculars, we spot them stepping into or out of pine timber, bedded beneath canyon rimrocks, and munching on mountain laurel and serviceberries. They get edgy at the approach of our pickup but seldom bolt like their public-land cousins do. This is one advantage of hunting behind Deseret's fence: Exclusivity breeds tolerance, since the occupants of most pickups in this neighborhood don't open fire the moment they spot antlers.

That tolerance lures us into a sort of complacency midway through my hunt here. We're careless with our approaches to deer, and I wonder how many pressure-sensitive older bucks we're bumping. Early one morning we park on a promontory so photographer Michael Friberg can take pictures in the gorgeous mountain light. Movement below catches my eye. It's a herd of does being pushed by a big buck. We should have blown them out—we've done everything wrong here: parking on the spine of the ridge, the four of us skylined and talking loud like we're ordering breakfast, careless with our scent. But the deer are forgiving. They drift away into a patch of timber, where they bed down in the shade of the rising morning.

▼ Clockwise from top left: The author and his buck in the timber; Sherwood sheathes his knife after quartering the buck; admiring a recovered AccuBond bullet; the author notches his tag. Opposite: Hoisting a mule deer quarter.

We get only a fair view of the big buck. We can tell he's tall and a wide-framed 4-by-something, but he's clearly an old deer. As he moves into cover, he seems to wince, like he aches in his joints.

Vagrant gets excited judging him through his spotting scope, and it occurs to me that even after three days, Maki and I haven't had "the talk" to decide who is shooting first. "You have your gun," Geoff observes. I had snatched my rifle, a Montana Rifle Company model chambered in the flat-shooting .280 Ackley Improved, from the truck to pose for photographs, not expecting to see a candidate for a shoulder mount. But I waste no time getting behind my binocular, suddenly invested in the outcome.

Unfortunately, so is the deer. As we've been assessing him, he's disappeared somewhere in the timber. We slink around the hill and finally find him in the obscuring cover, but he's bedded. There is a hole in the branches nearly as big as a cereal box, and I'm sure I can thread a 140-grain Nosler AccuBond through it. But just as we range him (364 yards), he stands up, turns, and a forkhorn buck beds just behind him. No shot.



THERE IS A HOLE IN THE BRANCHES
BIG AS A CEREAL BOX. I CAN THREAD
A 140-GRAIN NOSLER THROUGH IT.





▲ Clockwise from top: The Tabernacle Buck, in the timber where he died; bags of deboned mule deer venison ready for final trimming; the end of the road for trophy deer and elk at Deseret Land & Livestock.

Vagrant and I watch for another 45 minutes, silently cheering when the young deer moves away, then groaning when our buck shifts behind even more cover. This is one of the unexpected realities of mule deer hunting: Deer simply disappear. They're masters of evaporating in tendrils of cover that don't appear large enough to hide a jackrabbit, let alone a mature buck. On this hot October day, as bees hum in the sun-fired sagebrush, our buck is moving with the shade, and somehow there is always a limb, or a tree trunk, or a shrub between him and us.

THE OPPOSITE OF TROLLING

Vagrant and I have given up on our original spot, staking Maki on the slope in case the deer exit the cover the way they went in. The other three of us back out, hike up and over a ridge, and spider-walk down into the timbered vale where we hope the buck is still bedded. We use ridgelines and sagebrush to hide our approach and finally get set up a quarter mile from where we think our buck is holed up. This is how I like to hunt mule deer, gaining feet and inches at a time, instead of trolling from a pickup.

We see pieces and parts of a few deer, but we can't put antlers on any of them.

An hour into this new spot, Friberg asks how long we might be here. Vagrant says deer like to stand up to stretch between 1 and 2 p.m. I check my watch: 12:57. When I look up, a doe is standing, then a young buck appears, then our buck stands, stretches, turns, and beds down again, but this time within full view of us. His rack is tall and wide. His face is blocky and white. He may be older than five. We range him: 352 yards. I have all the time in the world to set up Landon's tripod as a shooting rest and settle my crosshairs behind the sleeping buck's shoulder.

When I shoot, the bullet splits the mountain air. Then, a fraction of a second later, I hear the hydraulic thwump as lead meets venison down in the shade. The buck stiffens, and then stretches out in his bed.

It takes us the rest of the afternoon to quarter the buck and pack him out of the timbered hole. My Browning pack hauls the backstraps, a front quarter, and the buck's head. Then we're back in the pickup, trolling again for an old veteran for Maki, as Vagrant enumerates the bucks of Deseret.

"The ranch's goal is a 190-inch buck, or a 200-plus-inch non-typical," Vagrant says. "Every year, about half the deer we kill are typicals, half non-typical. Last year we killed a 208 typical and a 245-inch non-typical." I'm in the back seat, scraping blood and meat out of my fingernails. It's not that I'm uninterested in the quantification of Deseret's deer. It's just that the numbers don't especially matter to me.

Instead, I drink in the evening light from a high ridge. To the south, I see the spine of the Wasatch Range hanging over the Great Salt Lake, and in my binocular I can see a ski slope above Park City. To the east, the Uinta Mountains catch the last of the sun. To the north of the mountains, I can see into Wyoming. A bull elk bugles from somewhere down a dark aspen canyon. The sun sets, and we turn the pickup toward the skinning shed.

God's country, indeed. ▲▲▲



MULE DEER GEAR

A PACK, AND A RIFLE, SUITED TO THE BACKCOUNTRY

I want a hard-wearing, flat-shooting rifle for mule deer hunting, where shots can be out to 400 yards. I settled on Montana Rifle Company's Model 1999 chambered in .280 Ackley Improved and topped with a 4-12x50 Cabela's Euro riflescope. Shooting a 140-grain Nosler AccuBond, the ballistics of the .280AI match those of the 7mm Rem. Mag., with far less recoil. My pack was SPG's new Browning Buck 2500RT, which weighs only 3.5 pounds empty but can tote 2,500 cubic inches of gear and features a quiet, moisture-resistant fabric.



RAM TRUCKS
DEER CAMP
HOW WE HUNT

POWERED BY



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If you hunt out of a deer camp with friends and family, you know that it's one of the highlights of the year...if not *the* highlight.

And in the evenings, you probably sit around the camp table with family and friends and discuss all kinds of deer-hunting related things: Should we do anything to improve the deer herd? Are we hunting the right way? How do we get that wallhanger that no one can seem to pattern? Can anybody beat the practical joke that we played on the new guy last season?

Some of these questions you may be able to answer. Others, maybe not. That's why we called on our deer-hunting experts to answer them for you. These hunters know more about deer and deer hunting than most anybody—and their answers may help you put more bucks on your deer pole this year. Good hunting!

MICHAEL HUNSUCKER



Michael Hunsucker, President and Executive Producer of *Heartland Bowhunter*, has been involved with the show since its inception in 2007. Mike took his first P&Y whitetail at the age of 16. Since then he has taken numerous trophy whitetails with archery equipment and has documented a majority of them on film. From scouting nearly every day in the summer to shed hunting in the spring, Mike is in the field nearly every day of the year.

What steps do you take for scent concealment, and how much do you think it matters?

When it comes to scent control, anything and everything you can do helps. Whether it's spraying down, washing clothes, or dressing in the field it can't hurt! Hunting the wind is the key regardless of how cautious you are, however.

All else being equal, how high do you place your treestands for bowhunting?

We try to hang around 20 feet. It's high enough to be hidden well and still have a good shot angle at deer. Every set-up is different, though, depending on the area and surroundings.

When is the absolute best time to use a deer decoy?

My favorite time to use a decoy is during the seeking phase in late October and early November. The first few does have come into estrus and the bucks are cruising, looking for that one receptive doe.

How do you kill a nocturnal buck?

It's very difficult. Usually the rut is your best bet to catch a big buck slipping up and moving in daylight. You can do it earlier or later in the year, but moving in tight to where they are bedding can be risky.

How much time do you invest in one stand location during the rut before moving to another?

It all depends on the wind direction. We definitely have our go-to spots that we hunt during the rut, but we still try not to over-hunt areas, even during November.

You're in your stand looking at a 190-inch non typical, a 170-inch typical, and a 165-inch clean 8 pointer. Which one do you shoot?

Easy. Whichever gives me the shot first! If they all give me a shot, though, I'm shooting the 190. Bigger the better!

You can have one deer call to use all season. What is it? (No cheating with the multi-sound, all-in-one calls, either.)

A grunt call, no doubt. Deer are vocal animals and grunting is more common than most hunters realize.

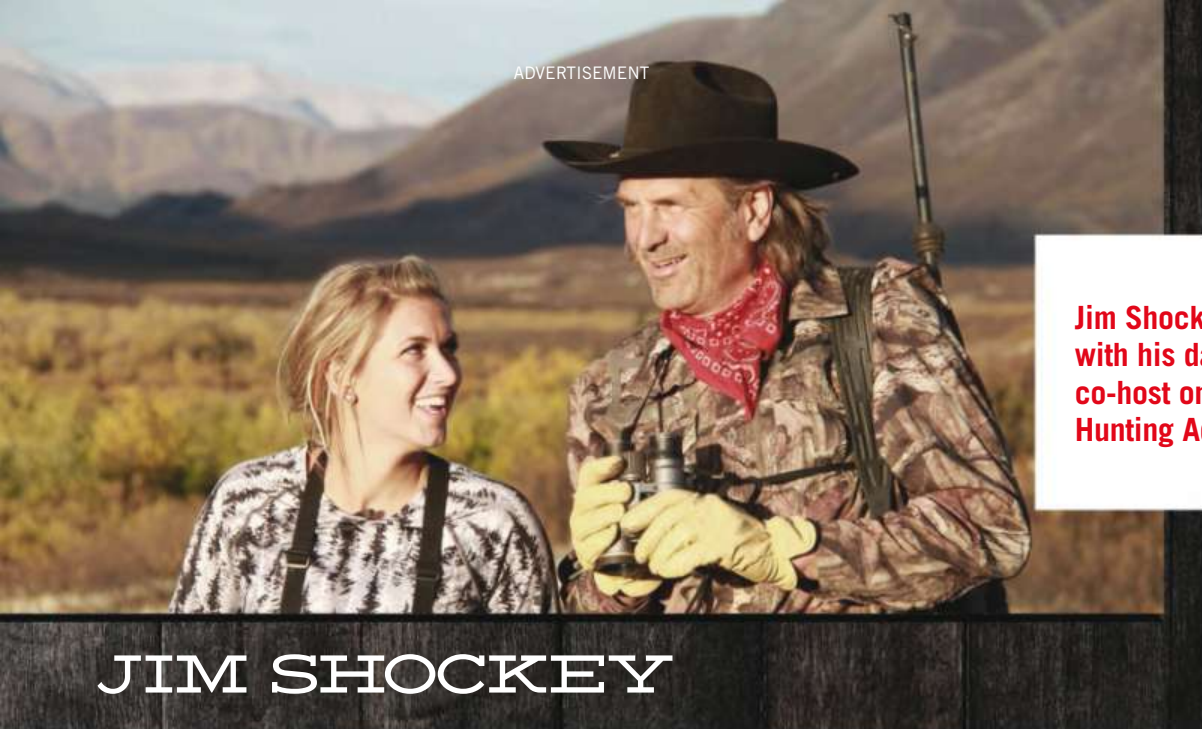
What is your one must-have piece of gear for deer hunting?

For bowhunting, hunting the wind is crucial, and having a wind indicator to check the wind is extremely important. If the wind isn't right, don't be afraid to back out and move stands.

Tell us about the best hunt you've ever had at your deer camp.

I killed the biggest buck of my life in North Dakota on opening day of season. It was a drought year and we were concentrating on hunting water sources. We set up over a little waterhole and had six bucks come in together. I was able to arrow the biggest one still in full velvet, scoring 175.





JIM SHOCKEY

Jim Shockey has been an award-winning outdoor writer, wildlife photographer/videographer, wilderness guide and outfitter for nearly 30 years. He is accomplished in archery, muzzleloader and rifle, and has traveled worldwide in pursuit of hunting adventures. Jim has attained 13 Boone and Crockett all-time record entries and is the first hunter to complete the “North American super slam” and “ultimate slam” using only a muzzleloader.

What steps do you take for scent concealment, and how much do you think it matters?

I’m terrible at doing anything proactive to keep from smelling like I’ve been hunting in a showerless camp for a month straight! So I just try and work the wind, rather than mask my smell.

All else being equal, how high do you place your treestands for bowhunting? How high is too high?

I prefer ground blinds. I don’t trust trees.

When is the absolute best time to use a deer decoy?

When you are hunting a place that the deer can see the decoy from a long way away, such as from a ground blind on a snowy hill with the decoy against the white snow. A buck will be able to see the decoy from a distance and can be rattled in easily.

You can have one deer call to use all season. What is it? (No cheating with the multi-sound, all-in-one calls, either.)

I use my voice. Our giant Saskatchewan whitetails have deeper grunts than most calls made today.

How do you kill a nocturnal buck?

Poachers use spotlights, but hunters have to rely on patience, lots of it. Eventually every buck, no matter how nocturnal, makes a mistake and the hunter just has to be there when the buck walks by his stand in the middle of the day.

It’s the heat of the rut, and you’re in a bow stand. Is your bow on a hanger (within easy reach) or in your hand? Why?

On a hanger. Otherwise you can’t sit still enough. Every hunter will wiggle and change hands and get cramps and sore arms from holding their bow. If it’s not comfortable, the hunter won’t sit still long enough. And you can always pull your bow off the hanger when you know the buck isn’t looking.

How much time do you invest in one stand location during the rut before moving to another?

I will sit for 23 days straight as long as the wind is right. I’ve done exactly that to kill my biggest buck ever, a 190-plus giant from Saskatchewan.

You’re in your stand looking at a 190-inch non typical, a 170-inch typical, and a 165-inch clean 8 pointer. Which one do you shoot?

The non typical every time. I’m a sucker for junk!





GUTS-GLORY



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THE DRURY BROTHERS



Terry and Mark Drury have been producing cutting-edge, state-of-the-art hunting videos since 1989. The brothers, both serious hunters of true trophy deer, have spent thousands of hours in the whitetail woods pursuing their craft and have amassed a body of knowledge about hunting tactics, land management, and deer behavior that is nearly unmatched today. Here are their answers to questions that many deer hunters ask them today:



What is your one must-have piece of gear for deer hunting?

We would probably say a Reconyx trail camera. It helps us scout and is always running! By knowing what deer we have on a farm and what their patterns are, it greatly helps our odds in trying to hone in on one!

What's the coolest deer camp tradition you've ever heard?

We've seen some places where everyone who went to a camp had to shoot an arrow into an old tree stump if they missed a deer. You'd be surprised how many arrows were in that stump!

The field you're hunting is full of deer when shooting light ends. How do you leave without spooking them?

A lot of times we will sit until dark and try to quietly climb down with the cover of darkness. Another trick is to owl hoot or use a coyote call. That will spook deer off the field, but they won't know it was a human that was there.

How do you kill a nocturnal buck?

That's the million-dollar question. It is very tough to convince that nocturnal buck to come out during legal shooting hours. One thing that can help you out is a major cold front coming in. That deer has to get up and fill his stomach full of the essential fats he needs to survive through the harsh conditions of a season. The rut is always another great opportunity as well. Many bucks are up on their feet and moving in ways they don't normally do. You just need to be in the right place at the right time.

It's the heat of the rut, and you're in a bow stand. Is your bow on a hanger (within easy reach) or in your hand? Why?

During the rut it can be a tricky thing. If you aren't prepared, you can very easily miss a shot opportunity. Deer are moving quickly and it is almost impossible to get them to stop sometimes. Your best bet is to have your bow ready and very close at hand. If you are hearing movement off in the timber, you better pick up that bow and be ready to go!

How much time do you invest in one stand location during the rut before moving to another?

It all depends on the wind and the movement. Very rarely will we sit a spot, even if it's the best spot, if we don't have the right wind direction. To some extent, that helps make the choice for us.

CHECK OUT MORE EXPERT TIPS & TACTICS

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MOSSY OAK

RAM TRUCKS
DEER CAMP
HOW WE HUNT



Toxey Haas
Founder and CEO



Ronnie "Cuz" Strickland
Senior Vice President



Chris Paradise
Senior Vice President,
Sales & Licensing



Ben Maki
Senior Vice President,
Marketing

How do you kill a nocturnal buck?

Religiously use trail cameras. Find a place where he travels regularly and pattern his movements with a trail camera. Then get a satellite map of the area and figure out where his bedding area is and where he is heading to eat. Nocturnal deer stay in and around the bedding area until after dark, so become really familiar with that area. When the rut kicks off, be there. Be willing to sit all day and you'll catch him slipping up.

What's the coolest deer camp tradition you've ever heard?

I'm a huge fan of initiating new hunters and making them part of this culture, so I love seeing a young man or woman with a streak of blood from their first kill worn proudly on their cheek.

When is the absolute best time to use a deer decoy?

For me it's during the seeking phase of the rut, just before the rut kicks into overdrive. Bucks are looking hard and on their feet all day. Combined with calling and rattling, a decoy can be deadly.

All else being equal, how high do you place your treestands for bowhunting? How high is too high?

Most of my treestand sets are 18 to 25 feet high, depending on shooting lanes and the available cover. If you set a stand much higher than that, I believe the shot angles are too steep and you run a higher risk of single lung hits. Too high is a matter of opinion, but I think 30 feet is the highest you'd ever need to go.

My camp likes to drive deer all season. Some of us feel that it pushes deer away from our area, while others think it's the only way to see deer. Who's right?

That depends a lot on the size of your plot of land. If you have enough ground where deer can find a sanctuary, you're probably OK. If not, you are probably making your neighbor's hunting season pretty awesome.

What's the one absolutely quickest way to increase overall buck quality on my deer camp hunting property?

Don't shoot small bucks, pure and simple. Make sure they have available food all year and let them grow. In just a couple of years, you'll see big changes in the makeup of the heard.

What's the absolute best deer camp card game?

Texas Hold 'em. It'll let you know which guys in camp are good at lying—and those are the guys you really want to grill about what deer they saw that day.

How much time do you invest in one stand location during the rut before moving to another?

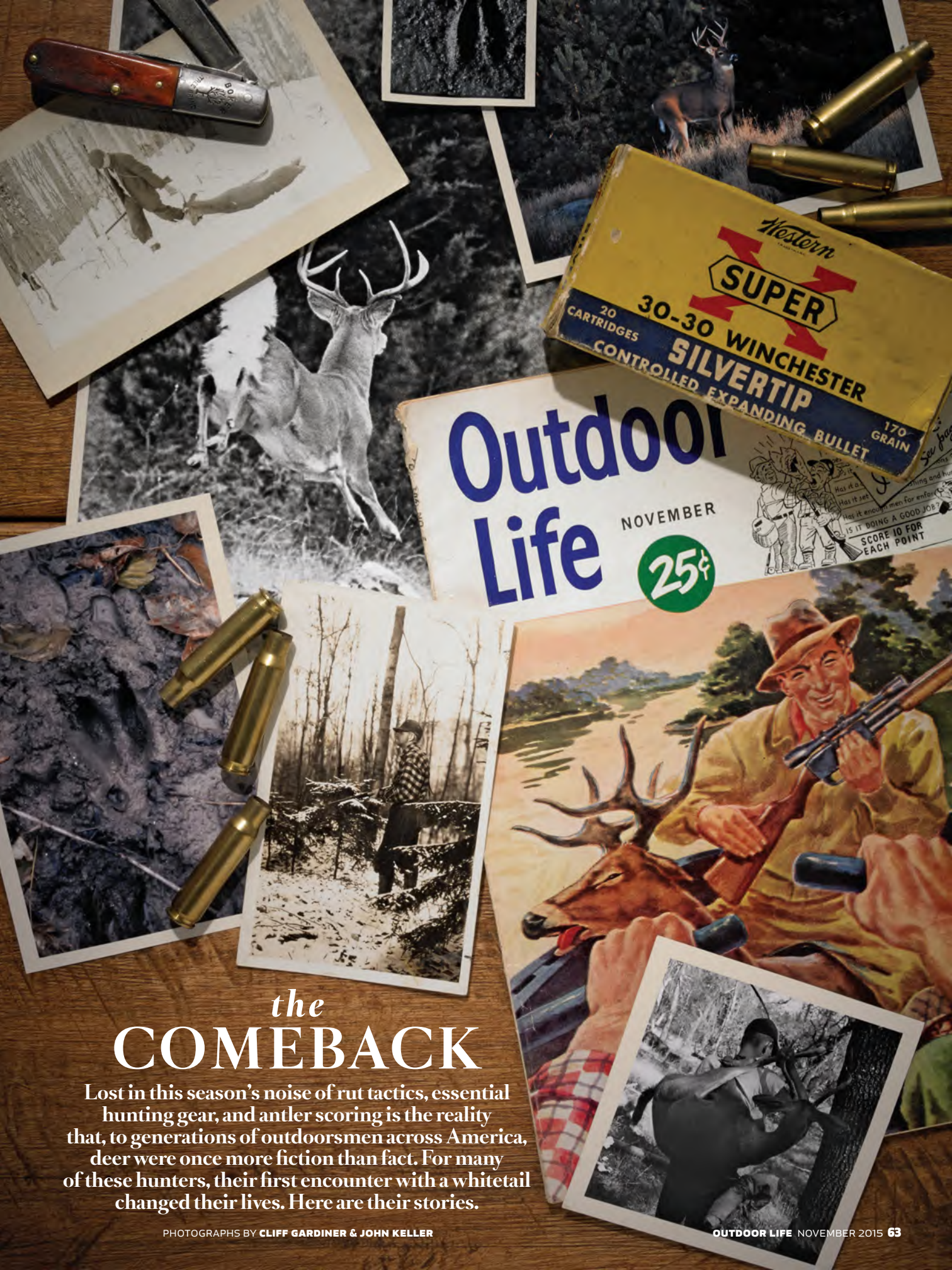
That all depends on activity. If I know the rut is rolling and I'm not seeing or hearing chasing after one sit, I'm gone. I know the deer are rolling somewhere, and during the rut it's about finding that magic spot, so if it's dead where I am—I'm gone.



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Outdoor Life

NOVEMBER
25¢

the COMEBACK

Lost in this season's noise of rut tactics, essential hunting gear, and antler scoring is the reality that, to generations of outdoorsmen across America, deer were once more fiction than fact. For many of these hunters, their first encounter with a whitetail changed their lives. Here are their stories.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CLIFF GARDINER & JOHN KELLER

OUTDOOR LIFE NOVEMBER 2015 63



Spomer with a Black Hills buck, 1981.

CALL OF THE WILD

► **THE EASTERN SOUTH DAKOTA** farm belt. Early 1960s. We didn't have much, but we had family and fields, fried chicken, corn on the cob, and Elvis on the radio. Come autumn, pheasants and rabbits were big adventure. A flock or two of snow geese might drop in to grub among the stripped cornstalks, but most merely passed over, their high, wild cries the language of another place.

Imagination was a boy's best friend. With it he could turn Grandpa's 2-acre tree lot into Teddy Roosevelt's African jungle or Daniel Boone's Kentucky wilderness. The fringe of young cottonwoods along the creek was the Amazon, the Zambezi, the Yukon. With homemade bows and broken BB guns, we hunted everything from elk to elephants, pronghorns to polar bears. But the wildest big game we ever saw were the milk cows, which seemed less than impressed with our stalking skills.

That changed one July when Aunt Frieda exploded through the kitchen door. "Deer! Deer! Deer!" she hollered. We rushed outside, the screen door slapping behind us, and stood on the stoop, dumbfounded. There, flashing through our green corn leaves, leaped three red, long-necked, long-legged deer. A doe and twin fawns, tails high, wide, and flashing through the field, headed to the cottonwoods and the creek. "Deer," my aunt half-whispered. The first she'd ever seen. "There they go. It looks like they're waving goodbye." But those white tails weren't waving goodbye to me. They were waving me over, calling me to follow, calling me home to a place I'd never been before, and from which I would never return. —Ron Spomer

SHOW AND TELL

When I was a kid in Missouri in the 1960s and '70s, if you killed a deer, you had to stand up in front of the class and tell your story. Any guy carrying a deer foot between classes in high school was a friggin' rock star. —Ray Eye

SALUTING THE FLAG

► I BELONGED TO A SMALL Boy Scout troop in Arkansas' Ozark Mountains. This was back in the early '60s. At one of our monthly meetings, the scoutmaster arrived late and excited. He did away with the normal agenda that evening and loaded the entire troop into a couple of cars so he could show us a surprise. Off we went down the winding roads of the Ozark National Forest to a beautiful glade. In the middle of the clearing were some flags, similar to little surveyor's flags, placed in a tight circle. The leader gathered us around the flags to show us a single deer track.

We didn't know what to say. None of us had ever seen a track—much less a deer. To us, they were animals found in a zoo—hapless critters bound up in small enclosures that schoolkids tried to feed cotton candy to. Some thought the track was a fake planted by our scoutmaster. To me, it was the beginning of a lifelong obsession with the whitetail. My dad took me back to that spot several times, and finally, one early morning, we actually saw a single doe. My dad and I looked on, amazed and speechless, at the small, scared creature. The doe soon scampered off, its white flag waving, leaving us dumbfounded. I've shot and eaten countless deer since then, even some that could be classified as "monsters." But none have made my heart thump harder than that first doe. —Gary Giudice

the Strike Breaker

► Hunting grabbed me at an early age. But my father did not hunt, so it was a surprise when he woke me before dawn and said, "Let's go look for deer." A strike had closed the Iowa packing plant where he worked, and he had time on his hands. At a spot in the hardwoods, we got out of the old Buick just as the cold November sun peeked over Cemetery Ridge. A trail through the bare trees was pounded down with deer tracks.

The deep woods are magical to a 14-year-old, and I fell behind. My father was well ahead of me when he shouted, "Hurry up! There's a big deer up here!"

Across a ravine, a whitetail buck ran through the trees to the edge of a pond. The buck seemed to know we were unarmed and stared at us before trotting into the woods. His antlers were wide and a strip of dark hair ran down the length of his back.

We watched without speaking, and then headed back to the car.

Because of the strike, we were broke, but Dad drove to the diner where his work buddies hung out. I don't think my dad carried a lot of weight with his co-workers, because he didn't hunt, but as he talked about this deer we had just seen, the din in the café died down and everybody listened in. My father's stature grew a little in my eyes that day. And that first buck remains as clear and crisp in my mind as the November sky at dawn. —Michael Babcock

POSSESSION

► MY GRANDPA, RON KIRBY—or Papa, as we call him—was a farmer. He drove beat-up trucks. He fished with large red-and-white bobbers for bluegill in ponds that smelled of livestock. “The smell of money,” he liked to say. He straightened used nails and saved them in tin Folgers cans. And he hunted deer.

The first deer season in Hancock County, Illinois, where four generations of my family were raised, was in the fall of 1962. My grandpa was 32 years old. The method of hunting that Papa and his neighbors practiced was called a “man drive.” They knew that a group effort was their best shot at killing scarce deer. But the first days of that first season didn’t go well.

By the last day of that first shotgun season, their five-man group had yet to kill anything. Undeterred, they set out to push a wooded section of Papa’s farm. Halfway through, they kicked up a buck, and I can only imagine their excitement as it burst from the brush and ran away from the drivers down into a creek bottom. Homer Sherrill was the first to fire at the deer, grazing him in the hind leg with a 20-gauge slug. The buck continued to run full-bore into the open and past Papa, who dropped him with his Ithaca Model 37 12-gauge.

Papa ran over to the dead deer, in awe at the sight of a deer up close and thrilled because it happened to be a nice buck. Homer hustled over, laying his claim to the deer, which had obviously not been mortally wounded by his shot. He wanted badly to have the deer mounted. As the five neighbors gathered round the felled whitetail, everyone knew it was my grandpa’s slug that put him down. It was the first deer killed in our township in anyone’s memory.

These days in this situation, tension would have filled the air like dust in a grain bin, and maybe even the game warden would be called. But these guys were buddies, and they were neighbors, and when you hunt in a group, you kill deer together. Without drivers to walk the brush, the setters have nothing to shoot at. So my grandpa conceded.

“Okay, Homer, you can have his rack,” Papa said. “But I want his feet.”

So he cut the feet off and took them to a taxidermist, who turned the hooves upward and screwed them to a plaque to make a gun rack. For decades Papa proudly hung this trophy in his home. In a scrapbook he kept the article that the local paper wrote about the deer.

Years later, my dad bought that land from Papa, and he and my mother raised two sons on that farm. Three generations of men learned to hunt there. Soon it will be four. Papa is

still alive and well, but last fall I brought the gun rack home with me. At some point over the years, one of the feet started coming loose. Rather than use a fresh screw to fix it, Papa just hammered a couple of old recycled nails into the back to keep it from wiggling. Because what farmer would waste a brand-new screw when an old, straightened nail from a coffee can will do. —Ryan Kirby

HOMESTEADERS

I grew up in Edmore, North Dakota, just about halfway between Devils Lake and Canada. That’s where my dad’s side of the family has lived since emigrating from Norway. His grandfather and father never hunted. The only game around back then were waterfowl and Hungarian partridge, plus some remnant prairie chickens and sharptail grouse that they simply called “chickens” because they didn’t know the difference between the birds.

My dad saw his first whitetail as a teenager in 1962 or 1963. Back then, if you wanted to shoot a deer, you either went out West or to the woods. There were no deer on the prairie, a fact that our modern deer hunter has either forgotten or never realized. —Marty Egeland



Illinois farmers and the driven buck, 1962.

FIVE FOR A BUCK!!

A hunting they did go—Ronnie Kirby, Homer Sherrill, Leo Ancelet, Bob Reneau and Ronnie Paul—last Wednesday, final day of the season!

They saw a deer and Homer fired—the deer kept running—Kirby fired and brought the deer down—Homer, they found, had hit it in the hind leg.

It was a 195 lb., 8 point buck which dressed out 126 lbs at the locker.

Dec 5-1962

Pearce with a Kansas buck, 1977.



Bad luck for buck

but good luck for Mike Pearce, a KU sophomore from Tonganoxie who shot this 11-point deer about five miles west of town on Thursday morning.

Pro cage report! KU swim teams

LOVESTRUCK

I remember far less about my first kiss than about the first time I saw a deer. That’s no slight against the dark-haired lass named Debbie. It’s just that seeing a deer was that big of a deal in northeast Kansas when I was a kid.

I had the slickest crew cut in Tonganoxie because of all the time I spent at Thompson’s Barber Shop. If I sat there long enough, someone would come in with a story about somebody seeing a deer. Then, in the fall of ’65, just before Kansas became the last state to open a modern deer season, I saw one.

We had gone to a friend’s farm to check on his animals. As we pulled into his drive, two deer stood on the edge of his lawn. In the long light of late evening, they seemed to glow. I remember the coal-black eyes, the white ring around their muzzles, and, my gosh, the antlers. Nothing from my childhood is as seared into my memory as those two bucks. That includes the surprising lip-lock placed on my mouth by Debbie several years later. But maybe her heart wasn’t totally in that kiss. Maybe it was her way of keeping me from talking about deer and deer hunting. As Debbie now knows, after 35 years of marriage, that’s just never going to happen. —Michael Pearce



Jeanneret with an Ohio deer, 1979.

HUNTING BY THE QUART

▶ MY HUNTING MENTOR, Gary Sloan, measures bucks in quarts, not Boone and Crockett points.

Gary was born in 1932, the Dirty Thirties. His family homesteaded a stump ranch on the rainy western slope of the Cabinet Mountains in Lincoln County, Montana. His father cut and sold cedar fence posts for cash, but the family survived on a big garden and wild game.

"Game meat was very important to us," Sloan remembers. "That was pretty much true of most of the people that lived there in those days." Venison was canned in mason jars, alongside garden produce. A big buck supplied 30 quarts of meat.

During the Great Depression, the imperative to feed one's family often eclipsed loyalty to hunting regulations. Deer populations were cropped short.

"A standard way to hunt when I was young was to look for one set of deer tracks, no matter how old they were, and then just stay on those tracks all day, and maybe the next. Now you can go out and just about everywhere you look, there's another set of deer tracks."

Gary killed his first deer—a young whitetail buck—at age 9, shooting his father's .30/30.

In the decades after World War II, logging converted a carpet of mature timber in Lincoln County into a patchwork of shrub fields and second growth. Population-crushing snows became less frequent. Hunting regulations took hold. Whitetails boomed.

Sloan, now 83, has watched deer populations rise and fall over the decades, particularly after a hard winter. As whitetail numbers climbed steadily in the 1970s and '80s, they provided a prey base for growing numbers of mountain lions and, more recently, wolves.

He also has noted an increased interest in antlers among hunters, and less emphasis on meat.

"There was a time when I was interested in shooting large bucks and bulls, but I grew out of it. I shot a big buck when I was about 17, but no one in my family would touch it because it was so tough and rank. I had to eat every piece of that deer myself, and it took a while." —Ben Long

RURAL ROUTE

One morning, during my long bus ride to school across the farm country of northwestern Ohio, the bus driver spotted three deer standing in a freshly planted field. They were the first deer any of us had seen. The driver stopped the bus in the middle of the road for some time and we all looked in amazement at those brown beasts, forgetting all about school. And traffic. At her next stop, the driver asked to use the phone and called the local newspaper. —Doug Jeanneret



HOLIDAY GIFT

In the early 1970s, I moved my family to a little farmhand tenant house in the hardwoods north of Syracuse, New York. With plenty of energy and not a lot of money, my favorite pastime was walking in the woods looking for grouse and, as a Pennsylvania deer hunter, wondering if a whitetail could ever survive in this snowy country.

Then one day, I cut a track. Two years later, I saw my first tail bouncing through the woods, and then there were more. Three years after I discovered that first track, I slipped out one Thanksgiving morning, figuring, *What the heck, why not take the slug gun along?* Two hours later, my 3-year-old son, Neil, and I were counting points (all 8 of them) next to the garden out back. It is still the best Thanksgiving I can remember: homegrown garden vegetables and still-warm deer liver. —Craig Dougherty



Dougherty and his father, circa 1964.

FIRST GLIMPSE

I WAS PROBABLY SIX OR SEVEN years old. It was the mid 1960s, and my family was enjoying a late summer day boating along the coast of Massachusetts, roughly 20 miles north of Boston.

We'd anchored up for the night and finished a meal cooked over open coals in a hibachi on the transom. The evening air was cooling when my dad asked, "You up for a little adventure?" That caught me totally off guard. It would be dark soon, and time to head for the bunk. My dad sometimes went off night-fishing for stripers, but I was never allowed to go along. I wasn't about to pass up this opportunity, whatever it was.

Dad pulled on the starter cord a few times, the motor coughed, and we putted off toward the sandy beach. We had nearly reached the shore before I mustered up enough courage to ask where we were going. "To look for deer," he replied.

Deer?! My mind was abuzz. To that point, I don't think anyone had even spoken the word in our household, and I later learned that those who hunted them had to drive three hours west to the Berkshires, or at least that far north to Maine.

My growing flood of questions was cut short as we topped the first sand dune and Dad cautioned, "We need to be quiet now." As he peeked over the dune grass, I noticed a sudden change in his body language as he tensed, then turned and urgently waved me on. "Stay low," he said.

My eyes caught sight of three reddish-brown spots that stood out boldly against the green expanse. They seemed almost to glow in the waning daylight, and I was completely awestruck. It would be more than a decade before I saw another.

I can't say it was the deciding factor, but that sighting certainly influenced my decision to pursue a career in wildlife biology. By the 1980s, I was in graduate school and well on my way to becoming an accomplished hunter. The deer population had reached nuisance level, and I was invited to participate in a controlled hunt in the same area where I caught my first glimpse of that rare creature. In a way, both the deer and I had come full circle. —Bob Humphrey



Humphrey with his first deer, 1984.

Bumper Crop

I grew up in northern Illinois, just 14 miles south of the Wisconsin border. But when I was a kid, if you wanted to hunt deer, you had to go to the northern part of Wisconsin.

The first deer I saw in Stephenson County, Illinois, was one my dad hit with his company car. My mother and I had to drive out to pick him up, as it pretty well did in the grille and radiator. That was about 1952. One did not routinely see deer, and it wasn't until about 1958 that Illinois instituted the first of its three-day deer seasons. I worked the Freeport, Ill., check station as a Scout project, and I recall that the deer brought in were much larger than those I see now in Virginia. In fact, during my first Virginia deer hunt in 1971—a drive-and-post affair at Ft. A. P. Hill between Washington, D.C., and Richmond—I saw what I assumed to be three wild dogs approaching me, only to have them turn and reveal themselves to be whitetails. —John Taylor

TAKING A STAND

It was 1957, and I was 8 years old, helping my dad with chores, when I heard shots east of our farmhouse. My dad said it was the first deer season in Cottonwood County, Minnesota.

From then on, I spent all my time hunting—not only deer—and I didn't go anywhere without my bow, a 40-pound Bear Panda. You could say I grew up in the woods, but I never saw a treestand until the 1960s. Up until then, the only stand you might see was a couple of 2x4s nailed in the trees. If you wanted hunting gear, you went to the army surplus or to the hardware store.

—Dennis Highby



CAREER PATH

▶ I GREW UP ON A SMALL farm in rural northeastern Oklahoma. There were rumors of deer in Cherokee County, but I had never seen one or even met anyone who had. In the mid 1970s, when I was around 7 or 8, I was riding my bicycle down a dirt road that led to our nearest neighbor about a mile away when I encountered my first evidence of deer—a set of tracks crossing the road. Having been a voracious reader of *Outdoor Life* and *Fur-Fish-Game*, I was confident these were actual deer tracks.

I pedaled home with the zeal of an archaeologist who had just discovered the missing link to ask my father to accompany me back to the site. Though my father was not an avid hunter, he had hunted mule deer with his father in New Mexico as a young man and he quickly confirmed my finding.

Later that year, my father called everyone in our family to the back window of our house, which had a view of the back pasture. Underneath a couple of post oak trees stood three whitetail deer feeding on acorns. I couldn't contain my excitement. I was actually viewing deer for the first time, and this moment changed my life. I immediately wanted to know everything about them and, of course, to hunt them one day—and soon. The following spring, while traversing our land with BB gun in hand, I came face to face with a doe coming down the trail I was following. My connection with deer had advanced from track, to sighting, to close encounter, all within the span of a little more than a year. I was forever hooked.

A year or so later, we moved to town (Tahlequah, where the Trail of Tears ended) and I met a Native American boy about my age whose father was a deer hunter. We quickly became good friends, and soon I had my first invitation to actually hunt deer. I was 11 and armed only with a single-shot 20-gauge, but it didn't matter. I would soon be a deer hunter. Looking back on it, my friend's father actually knew almost nothing about deer or deer hunting, but neither did anyone else back then.

When the big day came, I was excited to learn that we would be hunting only about a mile from where I saw my first deer. Unfortunately, I didn't see a single deer during my first or even second year of hunting. But nothing was going to dampen my enthusiasm, which hit a fever pitch the next year when, at age 12, I read an article in *Outdoor Life* about a wildlife biologist who worked with deer. I immediately knew this would be my career. —Brian Murphy

the Other Texas

▶ When I started hunting in the 1980s, Texas' deer populations were concentrated in the Hill Country and South Texas. My county, Fannin, in northeast Texas, was mostly devoid of deer. Only a small pocket existed in the extreme northeast corner of the county, in the federal woods along the Red River.

My older brother and I would try, like hundreds of others, to kill a deer during the five-day season that existed back then. I hunted for six seasons before I ever saw a deer.

In the first days of winter in 1987, I saw my first deer track as I walked into the woods near our home. The following summer, we saw a few deer on our place, and by fall, we decided to hunt the property. I built a wood platform high up in an oak tree.

A week into that season in 1988, I shot my first buck from that old stand. A day later and from the same stand, my dad shot an almost identical buck standing in the same spot. Since then, we've killed many bucks on the place. In fact, across Fannin County, a couple of 200-inch deer are taken every year by hunters, along with plenty in the 150-plus-inch range. —Russell Graves

THE DEER THAT CHANGED THINGS

IN 1966, WHEN I hunted there, Michigan's Upper Peninsula was already storied deer country. The U.P.'s vast forests harbored huge deer that lost none of their weight over campfires. Since the late '40s, hunters had swarmed out of Detroit to crawl, bumper to bumper, across the Mackinac Bridge. "There were no deer south of Clare back then," one of those hunters told me. Not in Michigan's corn, not in its beanfields, alfalfa, or winter wheat.

Michigan's favorite son, Fred Bear, first motored north for deer in '29. He and two pals got to St. Helen, as far as their limited kitty would fuel their Model A. They pitched camp in a cold cedar swamp. They killed no deer. Six years later Bear would arrow his first, a small buck, at Blaney, a timbered tract in the U.P. In 1942, Bear and Jack Van Coevering of the *Detroit Free Press* returned to film a bowhunt there.

In bitter weather, hunting afoot, Bear fumbled an arrow to muff his only shot. That day, hands numb with cold, he could hardly get his boots and wet socks off over the lunch fire.

The men persevered, and later in the week they spied a buck up close. "In a split second he saw me," wrote Bear. "I was not at full draw, but I had to shoot..." Van Coevering's film brought deer hunting to people who had never seen a whitetail.

Less than a generation later, the south Michigan farms I'd once traipsed for pheasants grew bumper crops of deer. A creature once so rare that track sightings made news had colonized America's breadbasket. To ensure the animals would thrive, many landowners posted their property to protect "their" deer.

My first deer license cost \$5, and I shot a smoothbore slug gun.

Who would have thought then that hunters would one day scope shotguns and loose carbon shafts from bows with eccentric cams and optical sights? That they'd scout for deer with trail cameras and sit for them in railed treestands with cushioned seats, reporting action on cell phones? That earth claimed under the Homestead Act and broken for farms would one day sell not as arable land, but as deer-hunting property? That hunters would pay thousands of dollars per week hoping to waylay a whitetail from a woodlot?

Much has changed in Michigan since I killed my first deer. Deer have also changed Michigan. —Wayne van Zwoil

UNCLE PAUL

LOOKING BACK ON IT, I guess my Uncle Paul was my mentor, and the first hunter-conservationist I ever knew. He taught me how to climb a hill with the side of my boots, how to identify certain plants that benefit deer and other wildlife, and how to read rabbit tracks to determine their direction of travel. I always wanted to hunt deer with Uncle Paul, but it wasn't until I returned from Vietnam in August 1968 that I had my first opportunity. I was 21 years old.

That fall Uncle Paul invited me to hunt deer with him and his older brother, Henry, out of his cabin near Pigeon, Penn., in the Allegheny National Forest. Pigeon is located more than 100 miles from my hometown of Chewton. It was the nearest place we could find enough deer to hunt back in those days.

None of us saw a deer during the opening weekend. When the alarm went off on Monday, our last day, Uncle Paul peered out the cabin's window and announced, "I'm not going out—it's snowing." Henry wasn't feeling well and said that he, too, was going to sleep in. The snow wasn't going to dampen my enthusiasm, so I slipped out with my rifle, a Savage 99.

As I dropped into the woods, I found deer tracks going in all directions in the fresh snow. I was still-hunting parallel to the tracks when I detected movement ahead. I recognized it as a running deer, and in a scene I still replay, I aimed at the buck's vitals, fired, and quickly levered another round into the chamber. Before I knew it, the fellow who spooked the buck to me was instructing me on how to punch out my tag and field dress my first deer. Paul and Henry were still sleeping when I "quietly" slipped back into the cabin.

From under blankets, Uncle Paul groggily asked, "See anything?"

The pandemonium that erupted on my answer is one of my most cherished hunting memories. That weekend was the only time I ever hunted with Uncle Paul and Uncle Henry, to whom I was something of a surrogate son.

Uncle Henry died a couple of months following the hunt after a series of heart attacks. I later learned the first one had occurred the day before I got my deer, which is why he slept in the morning that I killed my first, most memorable, buck. —Jack Reneau

Reneau's uncle, Paul Tomon, with one of his favorite dogs.



THE BUCK OF TWENTY-SEVEN BREAK

▶ **IN 1950, MY PARENTS** moved to the flat land of the Mississippi Delta, near Greenville, located on the river halfway between Memphis and Vicksburg. Greenville was in the heart of the greatest deer habitat in the country. Thousands of acres of hardwood forest offered the perfect catalyst for deer resurgence.

The era of the hunting clubs had begun. My father worked for the US Gypsum Company, a manufacturer of forest-product building materials. The company had a large parcel of land north of Greenville between the levee and the river. Known as Catfish Point, this particular plot of river land had been in a game preserve controlled by the Mississippi Game and Fish Commission. Following 10 years of deer stocking and protection, the state considered it adequately populated with deer and opened Catfish Point for hunting. US Gypsum leased it as a hunting club, and my father was fortunate enough to be one of the charter members. I remember his official membership button with the number 13 printed in bold numerals.

On a cold, sleeting December morning in 1953, when I was home from college for the holidays, my father and I drove north of Greenville about 20 miles, and crossed the levee at a place called the Twenty-Seven Break. It was a low spot in the levee that had failed in the 1927 flood that nearly wiped out Vicksburg. The dirt humps of the failed levee had grown up in trees, resulting in a series of low rolling ridges. This was the opening day of the second deer season, and I was shooting a 12-gauge loaded with slugs. Dad dropped me at my stand, which was a spot on the ground next to a tree large enough to lean against. Just out in front, I could see a well-used game trail.

I sat against the tree in the chilly rain for a long time before I heard the first barks of the chase dogs, followed quickly by the appearance of three deer on the ridge across from my stand. They stopped on top of the ridge for what seemed like an eternity. Then the dogs barked again and the deer continued single-file down the ridge and up the trail that crossed in front of me.

I had never before seen a buck while hunting, but here were three within 30 yards of my stand. A 10-point was in front, an 8-point just behind him.

As I squeezed the trigger, the 10-point turned off the trail, leaving the 8-point in front of my sights. I have had plenty of memorable hunting experiences since, but none equal my first deer in the sleet on Catfish Point. —Dean Burns



Forbes with one of his first bucks.

FIRST PERSON

In the fall of 1960, my father took my brother and me to a state forest near my home in Morgantown, West Virginia, to pick pawpaws at a patch he remembered from his childhood. We were picking along a ridgeline when we had to cross a small stream. In the soft mud was a perfect deer track, the first any of us had ever seen. On Monday morning, when I returned to school, I couldn't wait to tell my friends. For weeks after that, people I didn't even know would stop and ask, "Did you really see a deer track?" —Melvin Forbes

TROPHY CASE

I grew up during the 1970s, and worked at a taxidermy shop in my hometown in northwest Oklahoma. At that time, it didn't take much of a buck to be considered a trophy. People *oohed* and *aahed* over an 8-point that wouldn't get a second look today. We mounted lots of folks' first deer that were sixes or smaller. As the years went by, the novelty of just killing an adult deer wore off. The definition of trophy changed.

I consider the deer restoration period to be the golden era of wildlife management across much of the country. Lots of biologists spent their time in the field really handling wildlife: netting, relocating, essentially making up their own jobs as they went along, because they were pioneering a field that was new to everyone. Over time, wildlife management has evolved into more of a profession about managing people, not critters. —Steve Wagner

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SHOOTING

TIP

Birds rarely flush perfectly straight away. Move your head to the wing on the side the bird is angling toward to establish a proper lead.

SHOTGUNNING

THE WONDERFUL 28

+ No group of shotgunners is more passionate about their favorite gauge than the fans of the diminutive 28. It's easy to shoot, wonderfully balanced, and, under the right circumstances, a terrific choice for hunting. All are reasons to add one to your collection if you haven't done so already. **BY JOHN TAYLOR**



► The Cost

There is a downside, however. Ammunition companies like to show a yearly profit, and despite all the great attributes of the 28, its loads, along with the .410's, are the most expensive upland loads you can buy. There aren't any bulk-packed or Quail and Dove promotional loads—just game and target loads, and there's not a wide choice there either. Pretty much 6, 7½, 8, and 9 are the shot choices. Winchester and Federal offer 6s and 7s in steel shot, and Federal offers No. 5 lead in addition to the other sizes. One way around this is to handload.

► The Limitations

There are two loads available: the traditional 7/8 ounce and the 1 ounce. Although we are a nation of magnums, Big Gulps, and extra-large everything else, patterning tests show that the 7/8-ounce load works best. But you can do your own tests, and if the 1-ounce load works well for you, go for it.

Which brings us to practical shooting distances. While I would like to say the 28 is a death ray, its range is really limited to 35 yards. That's not bad, because any grouse that lets you see him out to that distance deserves to be supper. Ditto for quail and doves. The only real issue is with larger birds, such as chukar and pheasants. Hunting wild birds of these species isn't the 28's forte. Put it on a game farm, however, and the 28 is right at home.

Another stretch, perhaps, is waterfowl. Teal over decoys and maybe mallards in timber where shots are within 20 to 25 yards—remember, the center stake on a skeet field is 21 yards from the shooting positions, so we're not compromising much in terms of range—are a possibility.

► The Payoff

Then there are the aesthetics of the 28. Few who pick one up will declare it a tomato stake. Rather, they love its looks, balance and feel. Made on a true-sized 28-gauge action, the guns feel light, but not so light as to be whippy. You can carry one all day in the grouse woods or

Ah, the 28-gauge. Until recently it was kept alive largely by competitive skeet shooters, but hunters across our nation have learned what the 28 can do—and it's a lot. The 28 goes way back—Parker Brothers made 28s as early as 1899; they also made 14-gauge guns. In fact, the 28 was but one of several gauges in that range. There were 24-, 32-, and 36-gauge guns made during the late 1800s and into the 20th century as well. Only the 28 survives.

One reason for this is that despite violating some of the basic theories of shotshell construction, the 28 performs like a champ. Famed British gunmaker W.W. Greener's theory of the "square load" states that for maximum efficiency, the height of the shot column should not exceed the internal diameter of the bore. But it certainly does in a 7/8-ounce 28-gauge load. On the plus side, 28s tend to be speedy out of the muzzle, providing a smidge more downrange energy to their pellets. Combine this with virtually no recoil—it's a great beginner's gauge—and with the ever-increasing number of 28-gauge shotguns on the market, and it's a real winner.

behind some stylish pointers and setters and be as fresh at a late-day flush as you were at the first. The 28s in the sidebar below run the gamut from relatively inexpensive to a bit pricey, but they will also handle like none other. At one time, the choice was the Winchester Model 12—few were made, and originals cost lots of bucks—or a Remington 11-48 semi-auto. Now there are numerous guns of different styles from which to choose.

While we might gulp at the price of a box of 28s on our local gun shop's shelf, they will deliver excellent downrange results if you keep yourself on a short leash regarding what's in range and what's not. Otherwise, once you shoot a 28, you'll be hooked.

SELECT THE RIGHT 28-GAUGE LOAD



Dove and Quail Kent Gamebore's Velocity with polished shot provides excellent patterns and downrange energy for these small birds. Choose No. 7 1/2 if shots are long; otherwise, No. 8 is the primary choice. (kentgamebore.com)



Ruffed Grouse and Woodcock Remington's STS Target loads use premium high-antimony No. 7 1/2 shot at 1,200 fps with a skeet and/or I.C. choke, which will deliver good terminal performance to put Mr. Drummer in the bag. (remington.com)



Game-Farm Pheasants and Chukar Federal Premium's Wing Shok in No. 5 or 6, or even 7 1/2, with I.C. or Light Modified choke, will work for close-flushing roosters or chukar in a put-and-take hunting scenario. (federalpremium.com)



Ducks Close-flying teal and perhaps close-range mallards in timber can be handled with Winchester's Xpert Steel in No. 6 with an I.C. choke. The velocity on these rounds is 1,300 fps, which will do a good job on these ducks inside 30 yards. (winchester.com)

FIVE GREAT 28-GAUGE SHOTGUNS



CONNECTICUT SHOTGUN MANUFACTURING CO. The all-American-made RBL side-by-side is hand-assembled and features laser engraving and fine wood. The Trulock chokes give you ultimate versatility in the field. (\$5,645; connecticutshotgun.com)



BROWNING ARMS The 725 Field over/under with the new FireLite mechanical trigger and low-profile receiver has great balance. Available with 26- or 28-inch barrels with Invector DS chokes, it's a winner. (\$2,540; browning.com)



ITHACA GUN CO. The classic and sleek bottom-ejecting Model 37 pump is built on a 28-gauge-size frame. This, coupled with its smooth-sided receiver, makes it an all-day-carry gun. Choose from a 24-, 26-, or 28-inch barrel with interchangeable choke tubes. (\$1,195; ithacagun.com)



TRISTAR ARMS The Turkish-made Viper G2 Silver, with its 26-inch vent-rib barrel, tips the scales at a mere 5 pounds. Gas-operated with screw-in chokes, it will serve the beginner and seasoned hunter alike. (\$689; tristararms.com)



FRANCHI The last of the John Browning-designed long-recoil actions, the 48 AL carries at a light 5.4 pounds, and handles like the veteran it is. Screw-in chokes in the 26-inch barrel ensure versatility; it also comes in a deluxe version. (\$999 standard; franchi.com)



MOSSBERG MVP-LC

AN AFFORDABLE, AND PORTABLE, CHASSIS RIFLE **BY JOHN B. SNOW**

In just a few short weeks, a good number of long-range rifle shooters will scribble wish lists to Santa, hoping that they've behaved well enough this year to merit the thing they covet above all else: a chassis-style bolt-action rifle.

The reason for this appeal to a higher power is that chassis rifles carry price tags that seem more in line with the down payment on a new truck than a new firearm. But they embody everything these riflemen crave in terms of accuracy and ruggedness. The precise mating between the stock, which forms the bedding, and the action is what makes them unique and expensive.

If you don't boast a Trump-like net worth, fear not. Mossberg has figured out a way to bring chassis-style construction and performance to the masses for a fraction of the cost.

The Future Is Now

To an older generation of hunters and shooters, the Mossberg MVP-LC—the "LC" stands for Light Chassis—looks more like something you'd see in *Star Wars* than in hunting camp. But the times they are a-changin', as Dylan told us years ago, and guns with a futuristic aesthetic are becoming the new norm.

One thing you might notice right away with the Mossberg is that the stock has a minimalist look. Most chassis rifles have bulky profiles, but this stock has been trimmed back significantly.

As a result, the MVP-LC weighs 8 pounds 7 ounces empty, with

no optic mounted. This is several pounds less than a typical beefed-up tactical rifle, making the Mossberg a more viable option to tote around when you're chasing game.

A good chunk of this .308's weight is located in the 18 1/2-inch medium-contour barrel. (The MVP-LC is also offered in .223 Rem. with a 16 1/4-inch barrel.) The barrel is button-rifled and free-floated, and comes with Silencerco's Trifecta muzzle brake, which is compatible with that company's Saker sound suppressor.

The barrel is affixed to the receiver with a barrel nut, allowing for easy and precise headspacing. These attributes, coupled with the rifle's free-floating bolt head, all help with the rifle's accuracy.

At the Range

I shot numerous types of .308 ammo through the rifle: hunting loads, inexpensive bulk ammo, and high-end match-grade rounds. The bullet weights and styles ranged from 155-grain FMJs to 175-grain Sierra Matchking BTHPs.

The rifle shot everything well, but it was especially fond of Nosler's 168-grain Custom Competition ammunition, turning in sub-MOA 5-shot groups every time, including one that measured .600 inch. Tallying all the ammo I shot, the MVP-LC's 5-shot groups averaged 1.107 inches.

The rifle does have some design issues that affect its ergonomics and, consequently, its performance. The trigger reach—the distance

PERFORMANCE					DESIGN				VALUE	TOTAL
Handling	Reliability	Accuracy	Meets Purpose	Versatility	Craftsmanship	Ergonomics	Durability	Aesthetics		
8	8	9	8	7	7	7	8	7	7	76



The stock comes with a swivel stud for attaching a sling or bipod and has other attachment points for various accessories.

between the pistol grip and the face of the trigger—is long, which makes it difficult to position the pad of the trigger finger flat across the face of the trigger, unless you have unusually large hands. The distance from the web of the grip to the trigger face is 3 inches, compared to the 2 ½-inch reach on several of my AR-10s. The consequence of this manifested itself during my accuracy testing, as my groups exhibited horizontal stringing, which is an indication of difficulties with trigger control.

On the other hand, the trigger, Mossberg's user-adjustable blade-style LBA model, broke at a crisp 2 ¼ pounds.

Another issue is that the magazine release is positioned far enough from the pistol grip that the shooter needs to rotate the trigger hand forward, breaking his grip, in order to depress it and remove the magazine.

AR Inspired

The rifle takes standard AR-10 magazines and ships with one 10-round Magpul Pmag.

The rifle cycled smoothly for me and handled rapid-fire drills well, and it had no issues

STATS

Caliber: .308 Win

Capacity: 10+1

Weight: 8 lb. 7 oz.

Trigger pull: 2 lb. 3 oz.

Barrel length: 18 ½ in.

Accuracy: 1.107 in.

Smallest group: .600 in.

Overall length: 38 ¼–41 ⅝ in.

Price: \$1,438

Contact: mossberg.com

with the feeding, extraction, and ejection. The oversize bolt handle provided enough leverage to maintain a brisk rate of fire.

The rifle also shot well from various supported and unsupported field positions. The angles on the forend settled nicely into my palm and allowed me to make consistent hits on a 12-inch steel plate at 300 yards from the kneeling position.

This would make a fine hunting rifle for situations that don't require hiking a lot. It's also an excellent choice for recreational shooting at longer distances, and would hold its own in a sniper competition.

NOTABLE FEATURES



+

The Magpul CTR buttstock adjusts for length of pull and has a fixed, raised cheekpiece. If desired, the buttstock can be swapped for other AR-compatible styles, though the replacement might require a different type of buffer tube, depending on the model.



+

The action makes contact with the stock on the angled surfaces that run between the curved bottom of the stock inletting and the side walls of the stock. These areas provide solid support to the action, making the juncture rigid and helping the rifle's accuracy.

PROTECT YOUR EARS

THE SCIENCE BEHIND HEARING LOSS AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT **BY DAVID SVINARICH**

Many of our most beloved outdoor writers of the 20th century shared something in common beyond their mutual love of hunting and shooting and their skill with a pen. Many—including such greats as the late Elmer Keith, Jack O'Connor, and Nash Buckingham—were nearly deaf from the cumulative effects of gunfire that they sustained over a lifetime of shooting.

How Hearing Loss Occurs

Hunters and shooters are at particular risk for noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL). This can occur after a single exposure to gunfire or, as in the case of our esteemed outdoor writers, over a lifetime. NIHL occurs when a person is exposed to sounds above 85 dBA, and the sensitive hair cells in the inner ear, which transduce sound waves into nerve impulses, are either damaged (temporary hearing loss) or killed (permanent hearing loss). These delicate hair cells will not regenerate in humans, as they do in fish and birds.

Factors Affecting Shooters

Hearing loss may not affect both ears equally. Because of acoustic shadowing by the head, those shooting rifles and shotguns typically suffer greater hearing loss in the ear that is nearest to the muzzle. For a right-handed shooter, the left ear is generally exposed to 3 to 7 dBA more noise than the right ear. Other factors that affect the amount of noise a shooter is exposed to include the barrel length of the firearm (shorter barrels are generally louder), cartridge intensity, bullet speed (subsonic vs. supersonic), and the presence of a muzzle brake, which can add up to an additional 11 dBA. Your shooting environment is also an important consideration. Enclosed areas with hard, acoustically reflective surfaces,

such as an indoor shooting range with inadequate sound baffling, increases reverberation and sound exposure. Sound is also directional, so those standing beside a rifle, particularly if that rifle has a muzzle brake, receive considerably more noise exposure than the shooter.

Prevention

Attenuation of gunfire noise can be accomplished using either passive or active hearing protection. The relative amount of noise attenuation is described by a Noise Reduction Rating (NRR), which is usually printed on the packaging that comes with ear protection. This is a complex unit of measurement expressed in decibels, and is useful for comparing the relative level of noise attenuation among various forms of hearing protection. The higher the NRR number, the greater the noise reduction and the better hearing protection it provides.

The caveat here is that how well any hearing-protection device works depends on proper fit. Earplugs must completely seal the ear canal. Earmuffs must completely encompass the ear. Further, hearing protection devices do not reduce all frequencies of sound to the same degree, so the NRR, while useful, is still just a general guide to the amount of noise attenuation they provide.

Types of Hearing Protection

Passive hearing protection takes the form of either earplugs or conventional earmuffs. These can reduce actual noise by 5 to 13 dBA (see "Actual Levels of Protection," opposite). For noise that exceeds 105 dBA, the combined use of both earplugs and earmuffs is recommended. However, the degree of noise attenuation is not simply the combined NRR values for each type of hearing protection. For example, earplugs may have an NRR of 29 dBA and earmuffs an NRR of 27 dBA, but the additive effect is only about 34 dBA. This is because bone conduction allows a certain amount of sound to bypass the outer ear and directly stimulate the middle and inner ear. A good approximation of combined attenuation can be determined by simply adding 5 dBA to the higher of the two NRR values (see "The Numbers Behind Noise," opposite).

A third choice of passive hearing protection is custom earplugs. Molded in silicone or rubber, they conform precisely to the wearer's ear, thus ensuring a perfect fit. These are generally considered to be more comfortable than conventional earplugs. They are as effective (or more so) as regular earplugs and range widely in price from about the cost of a good set of passive headphones to several hundred dollars.

Active noise reduction (ANR) works



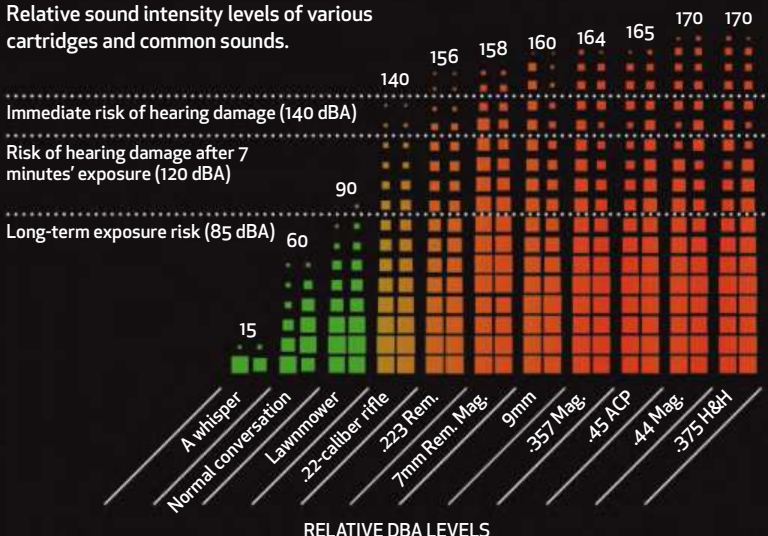
THE NUMBERS BEHIND NOISE

- Understanding decibels: The decibel scale is logarithmic, so perceived loudness of sound increases by a factor of 10 for every 10 dBA increase. For every 3 dBA increase in sound-intensity level, the intensity doubles.
- Calculating noise reduction: To determine the actual degree

of sound attenuation from hearing protection, take the NRR value, subtract 7, and divide the remainder by 2. So for a set of earplugs that has an NRR of 33 dBA, the actual noise reduction is only 13 dBA. If the ambient sound exposure was 150 dBA, the earplugs would reduce that sound to 137 dBA.

HOW LOUD IS IT?

Relative sound intensity levels of various cartridges and common sounds.



ACTUAL LEVELS OF PROTECTION

Typical NRR values and the real-world sound attenuation for various forms of hearing protection when used singly and in combination.

TYPE OF PROTECTION	NRR	ACTUAL SOUND ATTENUATION
EARPLUGS	33	13
PASSIVE EARMUFFS	31	12
EARPLUGS AND PASSIVE EARMUFFS	36	14.5
ACTIVE EARMUFFS	38	11.5

through a process called destructive interference, and occurs when an incoming sound wave is met with an inverse sound wave produced by the headphone, thus cancelling out the incoming sound. These noise-cancelling headphones are no better at protecting your ears than passive hearing protection, and have NRR ratings ranging from 15 to 30 dBA. They are also

considerably more expensive than passive forms of hearing protection. However, they do offer the advantage of allowing normal conversation by amplifying useful sounds like voices while reducing high-impulse sounds.

So which form of hearing protection is best? Earplugs are simple to use, inexpensive, disposable, will not get in the way

of your stock, and are as effective as any other type of protection. However, some shooters find them uncomfortable to wear and difficult to properly fit. Passive earmuffs are more expensive and more bulky, but they are generally more comfortable than earplugs. Nevertheless, combining the two remains the most effective way to reduce exposure to noise.

TOP HEARING PROTECTORS



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SUREFIRE SONIC DEFENDERS

Comfortable plugs that stay put. (\$14; surefire.com)



FOAM EAR PLUGS

Offer good protection solo or when combined with muffs.



SHOOTING
SKILLS

THE RASCALLY RABBIT

FOUR TIPS FROM ONE OF AMERICA'S TOP SPORTING CLAYS INSTRUCTORS
WILL HELP YOU BREAK THAT BOUNCING BUNNY **BY BRAD FITZPATRICK**



The erratic bounding of live rabbits is the inspiration for the sporting clays targets of the same name.

Most shotgunners are adequately equipped to break targets that fly through the air. After all, trap, skeet, and sporting clays presentations all rely on the same principles—you must swing through the target, shoot at the right time, and follow through. The angle, speed, and distance to the target changes, but the basic physics doesn't. However, there is one target that breaks all the rules—the rabbit.

Bounding across uneven ground, changing speeds, and alternating between straight-line rolls and spasmodic arches, the infamous rabbit can be the bane of even the best shooters. It doesn't follow a pattern, and it can make you look like a fool so quickly and so absolutely that more than one shooter has waited until the disc stopped rolling to take vengeance on the stationary bunny.

You rabbit haters out there, take heart. David Judah, an NSSA Level III instructor and the lead instructor at the Homestead Resort in Hot Springs, Virginia, shares your pain. The rabbit is tough to hit, and it's a tough target to teach. But Judah offers up these important tips to remember the next time you face the demon rabbit.

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1 CUT THE LEAD

►“Rabbits present somewhat of an optical illusion,” Judah says. “As the shot is taken, the ground explodes with dust and debris into the space surrounding it. As the rabbit passes through, it appears that the shooter missed just behind the target. At this point, any additional lead will simply compound the error. A good general rule is to take as little lead as possible while moving slowly through the target.”

2 USE LARGER SHOT

►Sometimes you might hit the target without actually breaking it. “Try to avoid small shot sizes, like 9,” Judah says. He prefers to use 7½ shot, which will create visible breaks so you won’t “dust” the target.

“If you look at the unbroken targets on the field, you will see some with small holes in them because the shot was not large enough to shatter it.”

3 FIND A GOOD SPOTTER

►One of the best ways to improve your game on rabbits is to find a friend to help identify the problem. But he needs to understand the illusion that rabbit presents.

“Shooters should make sure anyone spotting the misses is making the correct call. Of course, rabbits can be missed behind, but the majority of them are missed in front, so good calls are very important.”

4 SLOW YOUR ROLL

►All targets slow in flight, but no decrease in speed is as dramatic with flying targets as it is with rabbits.

“Remember that the friction of the ground under the target is slowing the target down considerably as it rolls along, so a nice slow swing will be far better than a rushed attempt,” says Judah.



BEST BUNNY LOADS From rimfires to scatterguns, here are five great hunting loads

1. FEDERAL GAME-SHOK UPLAND These budget-friendly loads are available in a wide variety of gauges and shot sizes. The 20-gauge 1 ounce load of No. 6 shot is one of the best. **2. HORNADY 17 HMR V-MAX** If you're hunting without dogs, the mild .17 HMR provides killing power and reach for long shots. **3. GAMO .22 CALIBER ROCKET PELLETS** Pellet rifles are cheap to shoot, light to carry, and deadly accurate, and they provide consistent kills out to moderate ranges. **4. CCI QUIET 22** The CCI Quiet 22 offers killing power with minimal noise. **5. WINCHESTER SUPER-X GAME LOADS** There are a host of loads in this line, from ½ ounce .410 to powerful 1 ¼ oz. 12-gauge loads, with shot sizes ranging from 4 to 8.

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ACCURACY KILLER

WHAT A WET BORE DOES TO BULLET FLIGHT **BY TOMMY TODD**

Whenever I've been out hunting or shooting and have experienced a flat-out miss for no good reason, I've been known to say, "But I'd sell you that sight picture"—meaning that the crosshairs were exactly where I wanted them when the shot broke.

This happened on an antelope hunt in Wyoming. I was hunting with a group that included my wife and some of our friends. We spotted a herd of goats and executed a stalk. After crawling for 100 yards through sagebrush and a foot of snow that had fallen the night before, we got into shooting position on a knoll about 150 yards from the herd. I had a doe/fawn tag, and after quietly watching the animals, I picked a doe that did not have any yearlings still with her. I steadied my rifle, a recently built .358 Winchester using 225-grain Sierra Spitzer boattails, for a shot off my shooting sticks.

An Epic Miss

At the crack of the shot, the last thing I saw in the scope was perfect crosshair alignment, and I felt the rifle tracking straight back toward me. I expected excitement and high fives, but instead my buddy said, "I can't believe you missed that doe by that much!" He watched the bullet impact way over her back. Now, I'm not the best shot in the world, but I know when I have a good sight picture and execute proper follow-through. Immediately my mind started churning, and the best I could come up with was the possibility that I had snow in the barrel. Remember the crawl to get into shooting position?

Upon returning to work (as chief ballisticsian for Sierra Bullets), I thought up a test to verify or debunk the theory that snow or water had gotten into the muzzle of my rifle and caused a wild shot. During my hunt,

I did not have anything covering the muzzle, and, as you know, since a .35-caliber bore diameter is fairly large, it could easily have gotten contaminated.

The Test

I loaded nine rounds of .308 Winchester ammunition with 165-grain SBT bullets and approximately 38 grains of Accurate 2495, a combination that I know shoots well. [Editor's note: Although this load was safe in the rifle used in this test, it may not be safe in your specific firearm.] I then shot them through a fouled .308 Winchester barreled action in one of our return-to-battery machine rests at 200 yards.

I fired three shots and documented the velocity at 2,378 fps. I then fired three more shots, but before each shot I placed a piece of electrician's tape over the muzzle, which would keep water, snow, and debris out of the barrel during a hunt. There was no change in either accuracy or velocity with

the electrician's tape in place.

Next, my right-hand-man in all things bullet-related, Tony Kelley, dipped the muzzle of the test rifle into a bucket of water before each of the next three shots.

Shooting with the last 8 inches or so of the bore wet reduced the velocity of this load by 47 fps. As you can see from the results below, you don't want any water in your barrel if you intend to hit what you're aiming at. I believe I found the reason that the doe escaped my efforts to transform her into table fare.

Luckily for me, an hour after my miss I got another chance at an antelope and made a good shot at approximately double the distance of the first attempt. That bullet hit precisely as intended, and I was able to fill my tag and my freezer. I'm betting that the barrel interior was wet the first time and dry the second. I have often heard the saying, "Keep your powder dry." And from my experience and this test, one could add "and your barrel!"

.308 WIN. SHOOTING A 165-GR. SBT BULLET @ 200 YARDS, 3-SHOT GROUPS

BORE CONDITION	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
DRY, NO TAPE	2,378 FPS	.88 IN.
DRY, TAPED MUZZLE	2,378 FPS	.88 IN.
DIPPED IN WATER	2,331 FPS	6.5 IN.

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SHOOTING
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SILENCERCO HYBRID



A SUPPRESSOR THAT (ALMOST) DOES IT ALL **BY JOHN B. SNOW**

More mainstream hunters and shooters are turning to sound suppressors to save their hearing, but one obstacle has been the caliber-specific nature of most silencers. The new Silencerco Hybrid, which is being rolled out in 2016, seeks to assuage the concerns shooters might have about using a suppressor on multiple firearms with different calibers.

The inside diameter of the Hybrid is .460 inch, meaning that cartridges with a diameter of .458—such as the .45-70 Govt. or .45 ACP—are the largest it can accommodate. Any cartridges smaller than that will still have its report muffled and won't run the risk of a baffle strike.

What makes the Hybrid unusual is that it is rated for even magnum-strength rifle cartridges, like the .300 Win. Mag. But it isn't so heavy that it is unwieldy to use on a pistol.

TRIGGER TIME

I got a chance to shoot the Hybrid on multiple firearms recently during an excursion in international waters off the Florida Keys. We had Hybrids mounted on a Springfield Armory .45 ACP, a CZ Scorpion in 9mm, a Marlin .45-70 lever gun, and a Knight's Armament in .308.

Standing on the stern of a 150-foot catamaran, we shot at targets floating in the water, trying to steady our aim in the 6-foot seas.

The Hybrid worked well on all the firearms and dropped the muzzle blast down to hearing-safe levels for all those calibers. Final pricing and specs on the Hybrid will be unveiled at the 2016 SHOT Show, the company says.

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DUCK-GUN CHEAT

HERE'S HOW TO ADD AN EXTRA SHELL TO YOUR SHOTGUN—LEGALLY **BY RYAN MULLER**

Migratory bird hunters, listen up. Here's a way to lawfully increase your shotgun's capacity by 25 percent. The One Shot Shell Holder (OSSH; \$20; carbonarms.com) was developed in 3-Gun competition as a way to reload your shotgun quickly in the event you shot it dry and locked the bolt back in the heat of battle. It also happens to be perfect for bird hunters whose shotguns are legally limited to a three-round capacity in the field. The OSSH is relatively inexpensive and easy to add to any shotgun.

1. Select Location

The OSSH comes with all the hardware needed. Use the included Velcro to attach the OSSH directly in the front ejection port, according to the supplied safety notice. If you prefer not to use the Velcro, you can place the OSSH on the forearm and mark the two holes with a marker of contrasting color to your forend. Make sure that the new hardware will not impede your shotgun's function.

2. Drill Mounting Holes

Remove the forend and place it in a position suitable for safe drilling. If you're using the Velcro method, simply drill two holes through the forend using the existing holes in the OSSH as a guide. The holes need to be large enough for the supplied bolts and washers to go through. If you used a marker, drill the holes on the two marks.



3. Bolt Into Position

With the supplied bolts and washers, affix the OSSH to your forend with the bolts pushing in from the outside. It is important not to overtighten the bolts.

How to Use It

Now that you have the OSSH mounted, the only thing left is to perfect the loading method. Insert a shell (preferably a dummy round) into the OSSH. With the shotgun empty and your action locked open to the rear, mount the gun in the same manner you would when firing. Rotate the shotgun 45 degrees counterclockwise (opposite for southpaws). In one smooth motion, slide your support hand to the rear using your fingers to push the shell from the OSSH and into the ejection port. Reverse the direction of your hand and depress the bolt-release button on the receiver as you move your hand back to the forend and into shooting position. When mastered, this technique takes less than one second.

BILL BUCKLEY (2)

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TIP

When making your own European mount, **boil your deer skull in sodium carbonate** (sal soda) to help remove any residual flesh and hide.



DONALD M. JONES

A buck is driven out of a thick cattail marsh.

CATTAIL WHITETAILS

DON'T DESPAIR WHEN DEER DISAPPEAR INTO A WETLAND JUNGLE. HERE ARE FOUR WAYS TO SHOOT A WHITETAIL THAT'S HIDING OUT IN A MARSH

BY TOM CARPENTER



WHETHER YOU CALL them cattails, bulrushes, reeds, or tules, this brand of tall, stiff, moisture-loving, and dense-growing plant abounds across much of whitetail range, especially as you head to the northland, out onto the prairies, and into the broad river valleys of the West. ►

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Mature bucks often sit tight in thick cattails waiting for drivers to walk past.

W **HITETAILS LOVE THEM.** Cattails offer deer a secure place to elude hunting pressure. Even where other cover is available, whitetails in search of seclusion will dive into a cattail marsh. And in many places—for instance, the wide-open spaces of western Minnesota, South Dakota, North Dakota, and Nebraska, where I frequently hunt—once the corn has been harvested, cattails often make up the only significant cover available to late-season deer.

Many hunters balk at the idea of hunting cattails. After all, it's wet, thick, and noisy in there, right? The answer is yes. But if that's where the whitetails are, what choice do you have? Here are four options for dealing with cattails this fall.

DRIVE THEM OUT

ONE OF THE BEST ways to shoot a whitetails in cattails is to push it out of its bed and into the sights of a posting hunter. The steps to success are simple:

- ▶ Pick a slough or cattail patch of limited size. Deer will just sneak around you if the marsh is too large.
- ▶ Post more hunters than you send into the cover. An ideal hunt has one to two pushers and two to four posters.
- ▶ Cover multiple escape routes with the posters. Whitetails can and will squirt out anywhere, including the back door and downwind.
- ▶ Push through cover multiple times to move deer; big bucks prefer to sit tight rather than flee blindly.
- ▶ Choose hardy souls to do the pushing. I love the job: It's good exercise, and having a posting partner or one of my sons take a deer I roused is good karma.

GET IN THERE WITH THEM

YOU DON'T NEED a handful of partners to hunt cattails. Get right in there on your own with the whitetails and find success on the move. Follow these guidelines:

- ▶ Stick to small patches of cattails. And look for short plants—waist height is about right—where you'll have a chance at hitting a bounding deer.
- ▶ Move into the wind to start, but don't be afraid to swing across and then travel with the breeze as you work around. Your scent will help move deer.
- ▶ Pause often to make whitetails nervous and more likely to bolt when you start moving forward again.
- ▶ Avoid taking a straight or predictable path through the cover—zigzag, backtrack, wander.
- ▶ Carry a short-barreled shotgun loaded with slugs for fast pointing and shooting at close range.

WALK THE LINE

CATTAILS OFTEN grow in strips or ribbons along ditches or waterways. These places are perfect for a pair of hunters. Here's how to work a corridor of cover:

- ▶ Move along both sides of the cattail strip, keeping each other in sight for safety purposes.
- ▶ Hopscotch along, with the hunter on one side of the strip staying put while the other hunter wanders forward, in and out of the edge of cover. Then that hunter stops and waits while the other moves along in the same fashion for a ways.
- ▶ With the right wind conditions, one driver can do the work of three or four. It's critical, however, that the driver go exceedingly slow and be thorough when moving through the thick cover. A stop-and-go drive works best. Look for whitetails sneaking out behind the driver.

GET A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

ANOTHER WAY to hunt cattails is to get above them. Hunting a wooded edge, where you can hang a tree-stand and see out into the cattails, is effective. Or set up in the rare copse of trees you find out in a cattail marsh. But what about where there are no trees?

- ▶ Set up a portable tripod stand to get above the cattails and see down into the cover.
- ▶ Try to backdrop yourself against willows, dogwoods, tag alders, or any other brushy vegetation that would break up your silhouette but not otherwise hold a treestand.
- ▶ Put your stands at crossings or funnels to increase your chances for deer traffic.
- ▶ When you shoot a deer at any distance, mark that spot carefully before getting down. It's sometimes tough to find a carcass amid a sea of cattails.

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SAFETY TIP

Store firearms in a secure area, inaccessible to children.

OUT COLD

SIMPLE TIPS TO STAY WARM
ON FRIGID DAYS IN THE WOODS
BY DARREN WARNER



Still-hunting is a great way to stay relatively warm on those bitter late-season deer hunts.

them in the cracks and holes of a box blind to keep frigid air from getting to you.

2 BRING BOOT BLANKETS

Some hunters are just prone to cold feet no matter what the insulation factor of their boots. I'm one of those guys, and I find that an inexpensive pair of boot blankets works great as supplemental insulation on the coldest hunts. I slip them over my hunting boots, place heat packs between the boots and the blankets, and have toasty tootsies all day.

3 INVEST IN HEAT PACKS

Speaking of heat packs, buy a bunch of mega-size, disposable heat packs designed for large body parts. Place a couple around your midsection to keep your core warm and prevent your body from drawing precious heat away from your extremities.

4 DOUBLE UP ON HATS

Remember how your mom used to tell you that 80 percent of heat loss happens through the head? While this pearl of maternal wisdom was designed to get you to wear a hat in winter, today we know it's not true. But that doesn't mean you should go hatless while hunting in cold weather. When I'm sitting for hours waiting for a behemoth buck to appear, I wear two winter hats: one made of wool and the other of fleece. They work well together to keep my noggin warm.

5 EAT THE RIGHT FOOD

Your goal is to avoid spikes in blood sugar, which can make you cold, so load up on complex carbohydrates with food like nuts, seeds, fruits, and vegetables. Consume protein-rich beans and unprocessed meats, and avoid things like bread, crackers, and candy, or anything high in saturated or trans fats.

6 DRINK HOT WATER

Consuming hot water throughout the day will help you stave off dehydration (which contributes to your getting cold), and will help warm you from the inside out.

HAVE YOU EVER hunted in truly cold temperatures? And by "truly cold" I mean -20 degrees Fahrenheit or below before factoring in the wind chill.

There are many inexpensive yet effective ways to beat the cold. Here are some I've used to fend off plummeting temperatures and hunt comfortably all day.

1 BE CRAZY ABOUT CARDBOARD

Placing a piece of cardboard underneath your feet will block out the cold and prevent it from burrowing through your boot sole. And I've learned through experience that even boots supposedly good down to -60 degrees Fahrenheit will let cold air in. You also can tear off strips of cardboard and stuff



HUNTING INSIDER BLACK BEARS



A black bear exits a beaver swamp in a hurry.

BEAR DRIVES 101

ONE OF DEER HUNTING'S MOST EFFECTIVE TACTICS ALSO WORKS WELL ON BRUINS **BY BILL VAZNIS**



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THE SOUND OF sizable branches snapping in an adjacent stand of oak and beech trees raised the hackles on Jeff Grab's neck. Something big was heading his way and he just knew it had to be a bear. He was posted at the top of a ravine, which was an obvious black bear escape route, while other members of his hunting party pushed a thick tangle of mountain laurel nearby.

They knew the bears were in there, as evidenced by the piles of fresh scat and tufts of fur found on tunnel-like trails leading in and out of the half-mile tract. But how to get them out?

"The trick to driving bears out of thick bedding cover is to first play the wind," says Grab, a New England construction supervisor, "and then take it slow and easy. No talking—let the bears ease along in front of you until they run out of cover. That's when they will make a mad dash for safety."

Nearby camp owners had twice seen a 400-pounder crossing an old footpath that wound its way through the overgrown tract. When that big bear broke into the open, Grab's jaw dropped.

"It was barreling past me, knocking down 2-inch saplings like they were matchsticks," he says. "I've tagged several bears over bait in Canada with my bow, but a spooked bear running for cover is a scary critter. We all know they can easily do damage to a man with those claws and canine teeth if you get in their way. I shot twice with my shotgun

at point-blank range, but I fevered up and missed both times."

While laurel thickets provide excellent cover for bruins, big-woods black bears also seek daytime refuge in thick, mixed spruce-fir growth found along the edges of lakes and streams, and in recently logged areas, where they like to bed among the sawed-off treetops.

"These slashings can be ankle-twisters to walk through, which is precisely why they hold bears," says Pennsylvania bear hunter Steve Sorensen. "The most productive of these cuts are often found on steep hillsides where resting bears can hide among the fallen branches while taking advantage of daytime thermals to detect human intrusion."

This combination of thick cover and inhospitable terrain makes the edges of wooded ravines and brushy slopes that lead uphill primary escape routes. Drivers should enter the clear-cut from below in mid to late morning, after the bears have had time to settle into their daytime lair, then zigzag uphill using their scent to push wary bears to waiting hunters on higher ground.

FOOD SOURCE PUSHES

"One trick we use to successfully drive black bears in fall is to first find what they

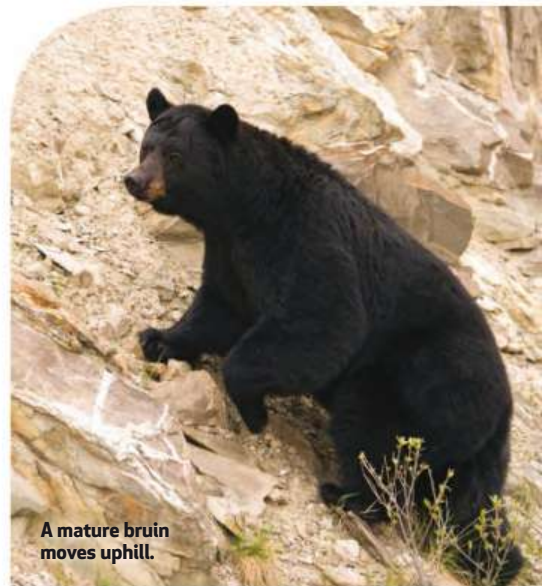
are eating," says New York bear-hunting veteran Ed Hall. "Bears will eat, take a short nap, and then continue feeding all day as long as there is food available to them as they try to pack on the pounds prior to hibernation.

"You will find bears in apple orchards for the first couple of hours of the day. Look for piles of fresh scat, half-eaten apples, and freshly broken branches to confirm your suspicions. Post standers crosswind of obvious escape routes such as fingers of brush, creekbeds, and the heads of nearby ravines. Make sure the hunters are quietly settled in at least a half hour before shooting light."

Uncut corn lots attract bears all day long. They will feed in the middle of the field, leaving occasionally for water, so you can drive these sanctuaries several times during midday hours with good results. Look down on the field from a nearby hill-top or a treestand to find crop circles where the bears have knocked down stalks to get at the ears. Fence lines and strips of cover between fields are good places to position a stander.

Hardwood ridge drives can be productive as well. Look for scat and tracks in the soft earth and newly clawed tree trunks

for fresh sign. Glance up occasionally as you are driving, however, as you might just catch a bear feeding in the treetops on wild black cherries or acorns. Don't try to push a bear upwind to waiting standers; rather, position the standers crosswind along the perimeter.



A mature bruin moves uphill.

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Be sure to meet with the owners of adjacent land to review all property lines.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF DEALING WITH TRESPASSERS

HELPFUL HINTS TO REDUCE INSTANCES OF ILLEGAL HUNTING ON YOUR LAND **BY DARREN WARNER**

If you own or lease hunting property, you'll inevitably have to deal with trespassers. Here are some do's and don'ts on preventing trespassing and handling violators effectively.

DO **POST YOUR PROPERTY**

While many states don't require "No Trespassing" signs to be erected, it's still a good idea to annually post the property. It lets everyone know you're serious about trespassing and that you won't tolerate interlopers.

Place highly visible signs around the perimeter of your property, and then walk it to ensure no one can access your land without seeing at least one sign. Some states have specific requirements for how large

signs and lettering must be to serve notice legally, so adhere to your state's posting laws.

DO **CREATE A NO-TRESPASSING COOPERATIVE**

Talk with neighbors before hunting season to review property boundaries and devise monitoring strategies to prevent trespassing. Doing this also provides the opportunity to discuss and reach a consensus on how to retrieve a wounded deer in the event that it dies on neighboring land.

DON'T **TRY TO DETAIN A TRESPASSER**

While it's extremely frustrating to catch someone on your land, most states consider trespassing to be a relatively minor offense (a misdemeanor

crime). It's not only illegal to detain someone for trespassing, but it can be dangerous. A Michigan conservation officer put it this way: "The violator is likely to be armed, and if they're willing to trespass, what other crimes are they willing to commit?"

If you lease property, talk with the landowner about how he or she wants to deal with trespassers. This prevents confusion and ensures that you're not overstepping your rights if you try to prosecute trespassers.

DON'T **OVERREACT**

When you catch a trespasser, it's normal to feel angry and violated—they're on your land (or land you leased) and probably up to no good. Inflammatory statements can only

make things worse.

"A mistake I see landowners make is that when they confront a trespasser, they immediately tell them, 'You're in trouble and I'm going to call a conservation officer,'" says Major Terry Hyndman, operations commander for the Law Enforcement Division of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. "That just warns the guy of what's coming and leads to arguments."

DO **COLLECT EVIDENCE**

If you catch a trespasser, assist law enforcement by taking a photo of the violator and/or their vehicle with your smartphone. Record the date and time of the incident, what the violator was wearing, and any other details that will help identify the

perpetrator(s).

One of the best ways to identify trespassers is to capture their photo with a game camera. Conceal cameras by placing them 15 feet off the ground and point them downward at common entry and exit routes. You can also use game cameras to prevent trespassing.

"I put dummy cameras up where trespassers can see them, and then I hide a real camera and point it at the dummy camera to snap pictures of anyone vandalizing the dummy," says Dan Perez, bowhunter and co-owner of Whitetail Properties (whitetailproperties.com). "I also put up signs that indicate the property is under electronic surveillance, which may make them think twice about trespassing."

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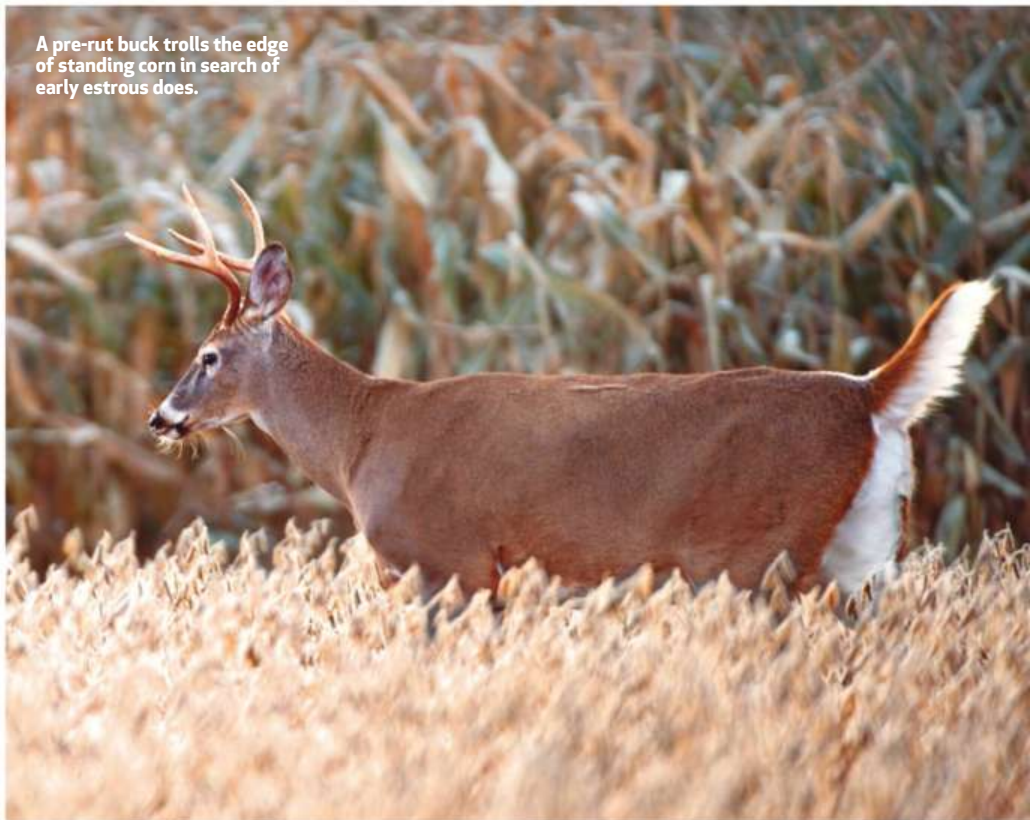
DON'T CUSS THOSE BIG FIELDS OF STANDING CORN **BY MARK KAYSER**

S

Standing cornfields. From the outside, these towering, vegetative metropolises appear impenetrable, as if guarded by Area 51 razor wire. Hundreds of acres of planted jungle allow whitetails to disappear in a single bound. And just try to invade this sanctuary on the wrong day. Crispy, crinkling corn leaves will give away your position with every brush of your body.

But don't turn your back just yet on the cornfields that make up much of whitetail territory. It may be the only property you have access to hunt. And in years of bad weather, when harvest is delayed, cornfields could provide deer with refuge on every section of land. Mother Nature may force your hand and make you hunt the stalk wonderland.

A pre-rut buck trolls the edge of standing corn in search of early estrous does.



When whitetails have hundreds of acres of corn at their disposal for evasion, they'll take corn over timber every time.

To find success in cornfields, you can't simply barge right in. It takes a thorough study to reveal weaknesses in a whitetail's cornfield fortification. First, start with a Google Earth map—or better yet, use hunting programs like ScoutLook Weather (scoutlookweather.com) that provide wind map overlays and allow you to mark stand locations for future reference. Remember, the satellite images are dated, but seeing the ground without crops or after harvest is what you're after. You want to see all the terrain features. Look for lowlands that may be difficult to plant due to abundant moisture or wetlands too large to drain.

Whitetails may browse, lounge, or bed in these depressions. Grassy waterways that channel out of the field can also provide paths to quietly and quickly access the field's interior.

As you peek down from the clouds, be especially alert to interior or edge trees capable of holding a treestand. Lone trees or small clusters are oddly compelling to whitetails, increasing the chance you'll get a passing shot. Plus, you'll also find trees in areas of a field deemed too difficult to plant, which puts them in edge-like locations. Refer to your favorite hunting textbook and review the phrase "whitetails are creatures of the edge."

Another common feature found within cornfields, which dates back to the era when farmers concurrently ran

livestock, is the presence of a reservoir. It could be lined with trees, but it will attract whitetails regardless of whether it holds water. But if it holds the only water in a square mile of corn, you're looking at a hotspot. Whitetails require up to 4 quarts of water a day, depending on their weight and the amount of vegetation they are digesting. Rutting bucks require even more than that to make it through the fall.

THE YELLOW ROWED

What if your cornfield option doesn't have a tree in which to perch? Fortunately, cornfields have an abundance of cover. First you want to don corn-color camouflage. Patterns like Mossy Oak's Shadow Grass Blades or Brush blend in nicely with November



HUNTING INSIDER

WHITETAILS



stalks, so take your pick. Then choose a location downwind of where you anticipate action and hunker in the edge. You can simply pull a few stalks down, creating a crisscrossing pattern of corn to veil your form. (Be careful not to damage the crop.)

You can also stake a blind in the interior, but as with any whitetail setup, it's best to place it a week or more prior to using it so wary deer get comfortable with its presence. Brush it in with stalks that have already fallen (again, don't damage the crop). And be sure to place it where it won't end up in the guts of a \$400,000 John Deere combine.

If the field doesn't exhibit interior openings, you'll be forced to hunt on the edges. Embrace the edge favoritism of the whitetail lifestyle. Dawn and dusk give you the best windows of opportunity to ambush a whitetail here. You may have to

hunker in a fence line, cower in an end row, or position yourself in a ground blind. Whitetails leisurely nibble spilt corn on edges. Look for end rows that have been harvested and then focus on where grain loading may have taken place, which would leave the scraps that whitetails love. Avoid areas with too much spilled grain, as some states consider that baiting.

Finally, you may want to pack a lunch, especially if you're hunting interior openings. The dense surroundings give whitetails a sense of confidence. You'll still see whitetail activity before sunrise and after sunset, but here you're just as likely to tag a buck at midday as during prime-time hours.

Corn does create a challenge if it is left unharvested during hunting season. But don't let it give you a headache. Study the obstacle and you'll discover a chink in the armor of a cornfield-loving whitetail.

A Northeast bowhunter recovers his buck amid a standing cornfield.



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SAVE 40%

\$2999

REG. PRICE \$49.99

24450324

SUPER COUPON

60 LED SOLAR SECURITY LIGHT

Bunker Hill Security®

Includes 6V, 900 mAh NiCd battery pack.

LOT 62534/69643 shown

SAVE 46%

\$3199

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24445796

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29 PIECE TITANIUM NITRIDE COATED HIGH SPEED STEEL DRILL BIT SET

Customer Rating

NEW

SAVE 44%

\$1399

REG. PRICE \$24.99

LOT 5889/62281
61637 shown

24432768

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9 PIECE FULLY POLISHED COMBINATION WRENCH SETS

PITTSBURGH

SAE LOT 69043
42304 shown

METRIC LOT 69044
42305

YOUR CHOICE!

\$599

REG. PRICE \$15.99

24436302

SUPER COUPON

AMMO BOX

Bunker Hill Security®

LOT 61451

NEW

SAVE 64%

\$499

REG. PRICE \$13.99

24437345

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WOW SUPER COUPON

3 GALLON, 100 PSI OILLESS AIR COMPRESSORS

A. HOT DOG STYLE
LOT 69269/97080 shown

B. PANCAKE
LOT 95275 shown
60637/61615

Customer Rating

SAVE 55%

YOUR CHOICE!

\$3999

REG. PRICE \$89.99

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SUPER COUPON

20-60 x 60mm SPOTTING SCOPE WITH TRIPOD

LOT 62774/94555 shown

Customer Rating

SAVE 42%

\$3999

REG. PRICE \$499.99

24443270

SUPER COUPON

TRIPLE BALL TRAILER HITCH

LOT 61913 shown
69874
61914

SAVE 66%

\$1999

REG. PRICE \$59.99

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SUPER COUPON

1195 LB. CAPACITY 4 FT. x 8 FT. HEAVY DUTY FOLDABLE UTILITY TRAILER

SAVE \$140

LOT 62170/62648
62666/90154 shown

\$25999

REG. PRICE \$399.99

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Customer Rating ★★★★★

US★GENERAL PRO
30", 5 DRAWER TOOL CART
LOT 69397
61427/95272 shown
• 704 lb. Capacity

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★ WINNER ★
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WOW SUPER COUPON

FREE

WITH ANY PURCHASE

3-1/2" SUPER BRIGHT NINE LED ALUMINUM FLASHLIGHT
LOT 69052 shown
69111/62522 62573

\$6.99 **VALUE**

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WOW SUPER COUPON

BADLAND
2500 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH WIRELESS REMOTE CONTROL
LOT 61258 shown
61840/61297/68146 **NEW**

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4-1/2" ANGLE GRINDER
drillmaster
LOT 60625 shown
95578/69645

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE 40%

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HANDGUN SAFE/VAULT
Gunker Hill Security
LOT 61581

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE \$80

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WOW SUPER COUPON

6.5 HP (212 CC) OHV HORIZONTAL SHAFT GAS ENGINES
LOT 60363
69730/68120

Customer Rating ★★★★★

PREDATOR ENGINES

SAVE \$180

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60", 4 DRAWER HARDWOOD WORKBENCH
LOT 69054/62603
83454 shown

WINDSOR DESIGN

\$139.99 ~~REG. PRICE \$249.99~~ **SAVE \$110**

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WOW SUPER COUPON

4000 PEAK/3200 RUNNING WATTS 6.5 HP (212 CC) GAS GENERATORS
LOT 68528/69729/69676 shown

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3/8" x 14 FT. GRADE 43 TOWING CHAIN
HaulMaster
LOT 60658
97711 shown

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CENTECH
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1/2" ELECTRIC IMPACT WRENCH
CHICAGO ELECTRIC
LOT 69606/61173
68099 shown

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HaulMaster
LOT 66537 shown
69505/62418

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10" SLIDING COMPOUND MITER SAW
CHICAGO ELECTRIC
LOT 61971/61972
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LOT 61229 shown
62463/61624

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To prove that you can eat great and feel great while losing ugly, unhealthy pounds the natural Vinegar way, you're invited to try the program for up to 3 months on a "You Must Be Satisfied Trial."

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What's the secret? Modern research combined with nature's golden elixir.

Since ancient times apple cider vinegar has been used in folk remedies to help control weight and speed-up the metabolism to burn fat. And to also aid overall good health.

Now-- for the first time -- Emily has combined the latest scientific findings and all the weight loss benefits of vinegar into a program with lifetime benefits-- to melt away pounds for health and beauty.

If you like food and hate dieting, you'll love losing pounds and inches the Vinegar way.

Suddenly your body will be energized with new vigor and zest as you combine nature's most powerful, nutritional foods with vinegar to trim away pounds while helping the body to heal itself.

You'll feel and look years younger

shedding unhealthy pounds that make one look older than their age.

According to her findings, staying trim and fit the Vinegar way also provides preventive health care against the curses of mankind-- cancer, heart disease, diabetes, high cholesterol and blood pressure and other maladies.

In fact, the book's program is so complete that it also helps you:

- Learn secrets of ageless beauty and glowing skin
- Help build the immune system, to fight arthritis and disease
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PLUS so much more that you simply must use the book's easy Vinegar way to lose all the weight you want to lose--and enjoy all its other benefits-- before deciding if you want to keep it.

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LETTERS

Dentist Recommends Vinegar

I have some useful advice that others may be interested in. When I got my Dentures several years ago, the Dentist told me use vinegar to get the plaque off them. So - about once a week I soak them in the wonder liquid and Presto - they sparkle.

I have since gotten implants - Since I am not fond of the hygienist scraping the posts for cleaning - I clean them with Vinegar before going for my check-up. On my last visit to her, she couldn't believe how clean they were and praised me for it!

I then asked the Dentist that put the implants in if the vinegar would harm the metal posts and he informed me it is OK to use it.

- D. L., New Braunfels, Tx.

Vinegar Heals Ear Ache in 2 days.

I have been plagued with an itchy ear for several months. It then developed into an earache. I was able to cure both the itch and earache in two days.

- J. D., Jacksonville, Fl.

NEWS & RESEARCH

Simple Vinegar used to reduce cervical cancer deaths by 31%

The latest study about vinegar, shows it will prevent an estimated 72,600 deaths from cervical cancer each year.

This according to a study released at the American Society of Clinical Oncology annual meeting in Chicago, IL.

The results were based over a 12 year period tracking 150,000 women in Mumbai, India, between the ages of 35-64 years.

The conclusion, a simple vinegar test significantly reduces cervical cancer deaths. Immediate plans are to implement this simple and successful screening test in developing countries.

The study had been planned for 16 years, but after the results were analyzed and found to be conclusive it was stopped at 12 years.

Vinegar has always been used for its versatility in home remedies, cooking and cleaning. And now scientific and medical findings are showing its a simple, low cost, non-invasive and safe for the patient.

Scarlett Johansson confesses her apple cider vinegar beauty secret

When celebrity beauty Scarlett Johansson needs to keep her skin looking beautiful and glowing one would think she would turn to high priced beauty creams.

Not so, according to an article in the February 2013 issue of Elle UK. She uses simple apple cider vinegar and its natural pH balancing properties to keep her skin looking amazing.

*Testimonials are atypical, your weight loss may be more or less. ©2015 JDI VA193S

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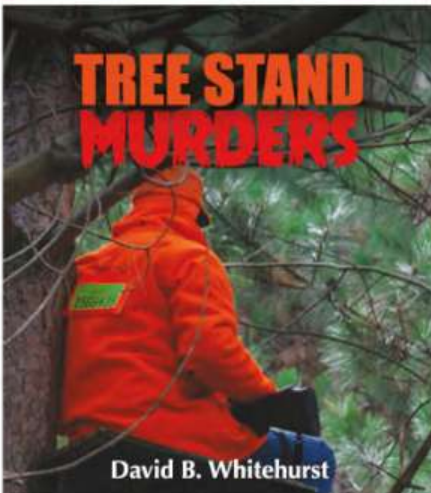
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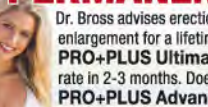
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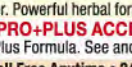
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day night

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